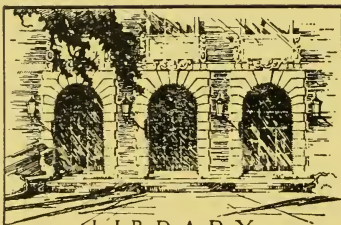




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THE
SPITFIRE,

A TALE OF THE SEA.

BY
CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF
"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "JACK ADAMS," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1840.

L O N D O N :

SCHULZE AND CO. 13, POLAND STREET.

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THE SPITFIRE.

CHAPTER I.

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“IT cannot be, Herbert, it cannot be. I can neither relinquish my rights nor my hopes. You know how I have been wronged; you know how bitterly, how cruelly I have been used. My brother—and still he is my brother—has cheated me of my birthright; and, not contented with crushing me by poverty, has imbued the father of the girl—the only girl I ever loved—with such hatred against me, that I am considered as a dependent where I ought to be in affluence—an intruder where I might have been a son.”

“ I wish I could assist you, master Albert ; but you know that I am dependent upon your brother ; from the day of his birth have I been under his roof, and although I know your wrongs and feel for you, yet I cannot league myself against the man who has used me well during my manhood, who has sheltered and pensioned me during my old age.

“ But, Herbert, you say that on the night when my father died, Rawlinson, the attorney, and my brother, after the sad event had taken place, never retired to rest, but having desired a fire to be lighted in an obscure room, they continued a low whispering conversation, and were only moved from the spot by your rushing to the door, and exclaiming that the chimney was on fire.”

“ It is all true, Sir,” replied the old servant. “ On that night when your father was stretched upon his death-bed, I was his principal attendant. He had long been drawing gradually to his last moment, and to that last he retained his intellect. I remember, as the lamp of life grew dimmer and dimmer, that he became

more anxious to speak about you ; your name was constantly upon his lips, and as the voice grew fainter and fainter, the old man pulled your brother towards him ; and I, for I could not be an idle spectator to such a scene, overheard these words—and I would swear to them, aye even if the axe were ready to sever my head from my body, or the dagger of the murderer at my heart—‘ Ronald,’ he said, ‘ obey my last injunctions—deal honestly, honourably by your brother. His independence will not impoverish you, and he is a good son and an affectionate brother.’ ”

“ I was not so far, Herbert, but that I could have been summoned in time to catch his last blessing. I had been removed from Raven Castle only a month previously to his death ; and although, the moment the messenger arrived, I started in great haste, and there was no delay, yet I did not arrive until the evening after my poor father’s death. Coldly, indeed, was I received ; and when I looked to my brother as my protector, I found rather the severity of a master than the affection of a

friend. There is some mystery in the affair. It is impossible that my father could have given all—all his immense wealth, with the large estate of Raven Castle, to one brother, to the exclusion of the other, who was his——”

“Favorite,” interrupted Herbert. “That there is a mystery, I feel—indeed, I know. I could tell you, young master, of an occurrence, but that I fear you will believe me crazy in my old age. But that these eyes beheld him, and that with unblanched cheeks I followed him—but I must not betray myself, or leave you to imagine that my reason has once wandered, my memory once fled. Be patient; you can do nothing by yourself. Time may unravel the mystery; but now it is useless to attempt to fathom it. Be content, master Albert, and endeavour to please your brother.”

“Please him, Herbert! I swear by heaven, that I have ever attended to his expressed wishes. I have become a slave—I feel myself gradually losing all my energies. I am no longer able to bear up against the slightest grievance; but when I am rebuked I burst into tears, like a

spoiled child, and curse the eyelids which cannot contain the moisture which betrays my weakened spirit. I cry, Herbert, d——n, I *cry*, when had I but retained my own soaring spirit, I could have stabbed—even a brother.”

“ For heaven’s sake, my young master——”

“ Call me not master, Herbert ; I am myself a servant—a dependent—cabined—confined—with a master in my own brother, who will not allow me the slender means I ask to start in life, and who watches me so carefully that I cannot get beyond the long range of Raven Castle, to insure my own liberty by flight. But come, good faithful old friend, let us drive away this grief, if possible, these useless bursts of passion. Tell me this tale of wonder which failed to frighten you. I will be bound for it, some midnight story of horrors is connected with that room in which my father died, and which has since been dismantled, until merely the bare walls remain to enclose the spot on which the best of parents departed.”

“ You are right, Sir,” said Herbert, looking carefully around him. “ But this way, master

Albert; let us strike into this dark shrubbery, and before the bell-rings to summon us all within the inner gates, I may have time to tell that which has only been told to one person, and he desired my lips to be for ever closed—not to dare to whisper even to myself the wanderings of my imbecile old mind. But I saw it—by Heaven, I saw it.”

“Who ordered you, Herbert, but my brother, to guard your tongue? Who else dares controul the thoughts or even the words, of a free-born Englishman? But I forget I am free-born and an Englishman, and yet I dare not boldly say that I have been cheated, I have been robbed; but I think so; and my mind cannot be chained into captivity, like him of old, who stole the fire from heaven, although I doubt if the vulture gnawed his heart more ravenously than the raven does mine.”

“Hush, hush! I heard a footstep; it seemed to turn to the right towards the long terrace walk which looks upon the flower garden. Stop, I’ll listen;—no—although I kept my ear close to the gravel walk, I heard nothing.

Whenever I think of that night, I see your brother's face—the pale yet determined countenance he wore, when he said, ‘Breathe not a word of it, Herbert, or death will follow within twenty-four hours.’ I have borne it, and should have borne it on to my grave, but that I feel it weighing me down towards it, and I must speak or die. Now, master Albert, pay attention. I know you will smile at first, perhaps ridicule me; but others believe, or they would not be so anxious to conceal it.

“When your father died, great was the lamentation of the household. We all loved him; his hand was ever charitable; the poor but asked, and were relieved. His tenants never were ground down for rents, when the harvest had been bad, or when untoward circumstances had rendered the payments difficult. You cannot fail to remember the distributions at Christmas, when bullocks were slaughtered, sheep killed, the castle filled with the tenantry; and long and loud was the cheer which followed the toast of your father's health as the foaming tankard was passed round, and

each, as he held the brimming cup, said from his heart and soul, 'God bless him!' You know that now, Christmas comes and goes without even a blazing faggot to cheer the gloom of that long hall, which formerly resounded with the songs of happiness, and which now is stealthily trodden, as if the walker dreaded lest the echo of his footstep should attract the notice of the present owner of that beautiful castle.

"It was near upon Christmas when your father died—indeed, it was on the twentieth of December that he breathed his last, and it was the day after Christmas day that he was buried. Such an event was sufficient, without the admonition which was so industriously circulated, that the tenantry need not assemble as usual; but they did assemble on the day following, and general and sincere was the feeling so evidently conspicuous; there was not a man, young or old, on the estate who did not swell the long train of mourners, as the good old man was carried in the large and plumed hearse; and when in the old church

there, the ruins of which are covered with the ivy, as if that plant would bind the half-ruined walls together, and like affection in its strongest sense, never relinquishes its hold, until destruction tumbled the one and destroyed the other. The youthful friend and associate of his old age read the service. The tears which coursed down the furrows of his face, choaked his utterance, and for a time he stopped. Then I tell you, master Albert, there were but two persons unmoved; one was Sir Ronald, the other the attorney.

“Around them they might have seen the sorrow of all their neighbours; some hid their old faces in their hands, whilst their heaving bosoms seemed cramped for breath; others, not ashamed to show the feelings which agitated them, held their heads up, and cried audibly. But over Sir Ronald’s face there grew no change; he maintained that cold disdainful air which never varies, even now. He seemed to consider the whole pageant as a necessary toil, which he must labour to overcome; and he looked at the nodding plumes placed

upon the bier, under which reposed his father, with all the unconcern of a man, who, having by desperate means arrived at the consummation of his wishes, cares little, very little how he has accomplished it.

“ The funeral was over, your father’s remains quietly placed into the vault where sleep those of your mother. One by one the tenants slowly withdrew, until the sexton and your brother were left alone. ‘ Once more to the vault,’ he said. The trembling menial obeyed; and as he placed his hands upon the coffin, your brother said, with a low but firm voice : ‘ Rest there ; and never again break into daylight or moonlight, to know the change which must come over us.’ It meant apparently nothing ; the old sexton thought it a prayer, and the pious reverence of the son was applauded by those who attributed to grief what was the result of pride.

“ From that hour all has been a dreary solitude around us. ’Tis true, we eat and drink ; one day is the record of the last and the herald of the following. There is no change ; from

that moment no stranger has ventured within the gates. It seems like consecrated ground, where no unhallowed step should tread. If this is the joy of life, give me the repose of your father."

"Proceed, proceed, good Herbert. You have in the fondness for my father, forgotten the tale which provoked these kind reminiscences—the story, Herbert, which my brother forbade you to tell. Time creeps on; we have but a few minutes more before we are locked like prisoners in our cells, and our master, like a wary sentinel, sees us in security and in supposed slumber."

"'Tis true, Sir. A month had elapsed since your father's death, when I, from some weak, perhaps superstitious awe of his goodness, resolved to lie one night in the bed he had so often pressed. The door had been carefully locked; and as I followed your brother to his bed room, I remarked the cautious manner he always fastened the door. This would have deterred most men, but to me it gave all the excitement of curiosity. I thought there must

be some secret to fathom, and I resolved to fathom it. It was in January, nearly towards the close, that I ventured into the room to sleep. There was no gusty wind rattling against the windows—no pattering rain to startle me in my slumbers, falling furiously against the glass. It was a still moonlight night, still as this one, but not near so dark. I did not undress myself, for I was apprehensive of cold, but lay down upon the bed, and drawing over me my large cloak, I prepared myself for sleep.

“At midnight, awaking from a restless slumber, I thought I heard a firm footstep near me. More fearful that it might be your brother than any other intruder, I remained quiet, and inasmuch as man could do it and live, I did not draw my breath; my eyes were open as now, my ears as quick; when, as if some sudden flash of lightning had dazzled my sight, and left me in greater darkness, I saw a blaze of light which for a moment deprived me of vision, and on hastily opening my eyes, there, full in my view, dressed in the dress familiar to us all, stood your——”

“Hence, babbler!” interrupted the stern voice of Sir Ronald, who laying his strong hand upon his servant, repeated, “Hence to your prayers; and remember, Herbert, that twenty-four hours soon flit away, and is but a short respite for man to sum up his long account. Albert, await me in the library, the bell tolls away. Poor blighted blockhead,” he continued, as Herbert looked at him to implore forgiveness, “would you have strengthened the brother in his hatred of his brother? would you have filled his mind with dark forebodings of the future, and fearful suspicions of the past? But that I scorn to wet my dagger’s point in such a lily-speckled heart, I would at this moment seal those white lips in everlasting silence. Hence! remember that the suspicious tyrant of Syracuse never held more attentive ears than I do. Speak but to any one living soul of this meeting, and to-morrow’s sun shall never shine upon you. Hence, and when I ring my bell, be in attendance in my room; and listen—you know me well—the bloody hand is not a more marked distinction

of my lineage, than is my word of my intention. To your prayers, old man; you have hurried yourself from my service, which load, (for servitude is ever a load) pressed so lightly upon you, that you might have glided slowly and softly into your grave; but old men are like babbling children; it seems wisdom to be garrulous; but the resolved, the prudent, the wise keep the finger of discretion upon the lips of silence.”

CHAPTER II.

A LARGE fire blazed in the library; there was warmth and comfort in the apartment. On the round table lay many books, in which were works, as if the reader had left them for future reference. In this room no one but Rawlinson was ever admitted. He seemed privileged, for he brooked [no refusal, he claimed as a right, that which others were denied as a favour.

In this apartment stood Albert awaiting the return of his brother. The eagle spirit of the lad had been crushed, the eye of youth which generally sparkles with animation, was dimmed

by solitude and apprehension, he felt himself a prisoner in a castle from which there was no retreat, and that which alarmed him most was the vigilant eye ever upon him. The surrounding tenantry were spies; and there seemed a superstitious fear of his brother. Sir Ronald assumed the severe garb of overstrained sanctity; there was the gloominess of the ascetic, the calmness of the saint; but on his lips was stamped that determination which was characteristic of the man. His silence, his reserve, was attributed to religion; his charity, for he gave not sparingly, was considered another proof of his sincerity; his abhorrence of wine or was-sail, seemed a confirmation of all.

The table was covered with the large volumes which were penned by Polycarp, Ireneus, Eusebius and writers of that class, who were the pioneers to remove some of the impediments which obstructed the knowledge of the early church: while near them was Erasmus and Luther, Knox, and other similar authors as references.

There was a great difference between this

man, and his only associate Rawlinson, who was an active, giddy, headstrong, pleasure hunting person, fond of his bottle, and latterly having become possessed of some wealth, which was attributed to the last will of an uncle, had appeared in an equipage, and supported an establishment, above both his station, and his character.

Albert had full time to pry into the secret of his brother's studies, there lay upon the table a large family bible, opened at the Epistle to the Hebrews; and the other volumes open on the table, were all upon this subject. His studies had evidently been to convince himself that Paul was the author of such Epistle; and to confute those who had thrown some doubt upon this subject, ascribing it to a Jew of Alexandria, seemed to have been his occupation.

Albert turned to the large leaf in the bible, on which was recorded the names of his ancestors,—against all but two, there was written, “died on such a date. The last whose name was rased from the book of life was his father :

the writing had been done hastily, and the date from the closing of the book had been blotted almost so as to render it illegible. With a pen, he carefully traced over the date, and then having given it due time to dry, he closed the book. As the leaves fell, he saw a loose sheet of writing paper, on which were several figures as if an account of large sums of money. There was an R, and opposite to it £20,000, below it an A, with £135,000 against it. Then was there a line of many figures, from which it appeared that the R was deducted, and the A added, drawing a kind of balance.

The step of his brother was now heard upon the staircase, and Albert, replacing the paper, stood near the fire place. His brother entered, and casting a hasty glance on his table, said in a tone of severity, "What, Albert, must you still be prying into that which does not concern you ; could not even my studies be sacred from your curiosity? you have turned over that bible, what made you do it?"

"I did, brother," replied the disheartened young man, "I looked at the records of our

family, and seeing the date of my father's death but indistinctly marked, I made it legible.

“ And this sheet of paper, Albert, I left it to mark a passage in Isaiah ; it has been removed, it is now in Exodus ? ”

“ It fell from the book, and I not knowing whence it came, replaced it anywhere.”

“ After, I presume,” interrupted Sir Ronald, “ you had made yourself acquainted with its contents.”

“ I saw,” replied Albert, “ nothing but some figures, which I did not understand, and which therefore I do not remember.”

“ Sit,” said the elder brother, pointing to a chair near the fire. “ Are you a man,” began Sir Ronald sternly, “ to listen to the tattle of old fools like Herbert, to draw conclusions from a brain-sick fancy of a ghost, and to court that imbecile old servant, to hear his croaks, and his forebodings about future dangers ? tell me, why do you herd with those so much below you ? ”

“ Because I have no other associate ; you

scarcely see me ; at dinner we never exchange a word ; and when that is ended, you retire to your study, and leave me to myself, without a friend, without a companion.”

“ The light and the frivolous must ever fly from themselves to burthen their neighbours,” remarked Sir Ronald ; “ and idleness and want of occupation, lead to love and to ruin. This girl, this Margaret Rawlinson, who is the object of your boyish idolatry must be forgotten ; it is the object of my present interview, to warn you from that hope. Her father will not allow her to unite herself to one, who has no means of supporting her ; and for one just twenty, who has never had spirit enough to work his way in life, but allow his best years to pass in useless indolence, thus rashly to marry were to entail misery upon both.”

“ Is this fair or generous of you, Ronald, thus to rebuke me with poverty, to censure me for my idleness, when heaven knows that I have made frequent request that you would place me in any situation of life rather than leave me to

that idleness, which I hate as much as you despise.

“Here are books,—read.”—

“To what end am I to plod over books when I cannot gain the advantage of conversation with any one; place me any where but where I am—and I feel I have energy enough to pursue my own path.”

“To ruin,” interrupted Sir Ronald; “when did you see Margaret last?”

“The day before yesterday.”

“Where?”

“In the shrubbery where you found Herbert and myself this evening.”

“And your conversation?”

“Was of our attachment. I told her that in her society alone I forgot my miseries, and that being with her, alleviated all my cares and solaced all my inquietude.”

“A pretty speech for a love stricken boy!—I have altered my intentions towards you—I must see more of you—this room is now open to you, excepting when Rawlinson calls. He has business with me often concerning my estates—

yours should I die—by inheritance. Here you must remain for the present—and surely in the noble view of the castle, if merely over the sea which foams and breaks like a petulant child against the shingles, but is ever varying in its colour, some reflection, some occupation might be given to your mind,—in me, these objects bring with them a salutary lesson—the wave which succeed its predecessor is but a type of the human race, so its boundless expanse in the emblem of eternity, and its roar and its breakers, to the noise and the turmoil of life—its calm surface in the easy conscience which reflects the heaven that is within it; its agitation, the despair of the guilty, and the cowardly. You will in this room find much to employ your time; but think not of Margaret, she can never be yours, and above all, hold no converse with Herbert; I may discharge him tomorrow. The man who could fill the mind of a lad so young as yourself, with brain-sick fancies of mighty phantoms, is not a fit companion for you; besides those days are passed when the familiarity of old dependants was encouraged.

You should have more pride, boy ; now go to supper, and leave me to my meditations and my prayers. Good night, Albert, to-morrow we will talk about your future path in life, and think over what I have said. Margaret is a sweet girl, a lovely creature ; but she is below you in life ; besides for a young man of twenty, without means to marry before his mind is formed, it is rashness, Albert, it is absolute madness. Think of this ; good night."

" He is gone," said Sir Ronald, " like a stricken deer with the arrow in his heart, rankling and poisoning the stream of life ! what would I not give now for even *his* feelings ! Who is there loves *me* ? No one ; like the tyrant who is feared, I roam about the large domain which calls me owner ; but I have no one with whom I can associate, and the man, the only man who forces himself upon me is the mirror of my own guilty conscience, the participator in my crime, the only one who can benefit by my folly.

" Now will I endeavour to balk the views of Rawlinson. He lords it over me, aye, and

threatens me with exposure, whilst he drains me of large sums to meet his overgrown expenses; he has yet some desperate game to play, which to-morrow may disclose. Oh that I could be a wandering beggar cast naked upon the moors, rather than remain the villain that I am, and feel the hell—the fury of remorse that preys upon me! it is my only consolation to know that I can inflict misery upon others. Albert is gone to supper—having heard the beauty of Margaret praised—and he denied the prospect of again beholding her. These books have served their turn. I am believed religious—moral—calm—contented. Pshaw! how easily are we poor worms blinded by appearances!—how little do we know, whilst the honey of a smile is upon the lips, the gall which is corroding the heart! Night after night my father's spirit haunts me, I fear to marry lest in exclamations in sleep I should betray the secret of my bosom. 'Good night,' I said to Albert—would I could say so to myself and hope it might be so. To bed—to bed—but not to

sleep—the soft slumber which recruits the wearied, is denied to him whose conscience never slumbers—the pale wan features which the many disturbed nights have fixed upon my face—shews me every morning how gradually I am becoming the prey of my own mind—Ah !”

“ My dear brother, I have thus hastily returned to tell you that Mr. Rawlinson is here—he is anxious to see you—says he must, he will see you. I left him draining a tumbler of wine, which he did not wait to be invited to take—and having called your servants, he has desired some supper to be brought.”

“ Go to him, Albert; it is your interest to speak kindly to him—he is Margaret’s father; and bid him, when he has supped, to meet me here; go. That man is my bane—what would I not give to murder him! Ah! what a wretch, a poor weak wretch I am! it would be only another crime, and his absence might restore me to some peace of mind; here I will await him, for I dare not shun him—his coming at this unseasonable hour forbodes no

good ;—he too I have deceived—he believes me religious—one sensible of the committed fault and eager to atone for it ;—he fears I may betray him as much as I fear his betrayal of me. I must be apparently studious.”

Having opened some works of the ancient writers, Sir Ronald sat himself down before the large bible.

His sorrow-stricken features might have deceived a steadier eye than Rawlinson's. The want of sleep, the harassing of a guilty conscience, had contributed to waste away his form ; his tall, gaunt, ungainly figure, moved slowly forward with slow and solemn step ; the laughter of hilarity never brightened his countenance, and when he spoke, his words came forth in a slow, steady, measured tone, which his sepulchral voice rendered discordant to the ear.

Instead of pursuing any study, Sir Ronald tutored himself to hear with calmness any proposition which Rawlinson might make, being well aware that any ebullition of passion would only render him more likely to fall

into the snare of the fowler. Nearly half an hour had elapsed when Rawlinson ushered himself into the presence of Sir Ronald; with the air of easy familiarity, he threw himself into a large arm-chair, and saying: "This is no time for prosing over books, Sir Ronald; I came to speak to you on an important point, to which you will do well to attend."

"I am here, Mr. Rawlinson, and ready to hear whatever you may say."

"Your brother seeks to marry my daughter; it must not be, you must stop this affection. Margaret has this day mentioned the substance of a conversation, which, if not actually a declaration of affection, is tantamount to it. I have higher views for her—this shall not be."

"I have this evening spoken to my brother about it. I have warned him of the consequences of such boyish indiscretion; I have endeavoured to move his pride to his rescue."

"His pride! Margaret's pride should have taught her better. Hear me, proud man; I hold your life in my hands; proof as clear as

the noon-day sun," continued Rawlinson, in a low steady whisper, "which no subtlety could overthrow, no quibble evade, is in my grasp; and if you throw but a hint of pride! I'll humble yours, or lead you to adorn a tree."

"You are moved, Rawlinson, into an unseemly passion. Be cool; you tell me you wish this affection crushed; I tell you it is done. What more do you want?"

"Want!" ejaculated Rawlinson, "I want—not to be insulted. What did you mean by pride? the pride of the lofty family of Raven's Castle, which would be followed by an alliance with a Rawlinson! Poor foolish fellow! pore over those thick musty volumes which treat of past, and neglect the great book of human life which I study. When for that paltry sum of money I consented to come into your views—to burn that which would have passed from you an enormous wealth; do you think I was that idiot to disarm myself, by destroying the original document? It was but the duplicate that fire consumed; the real deed is in security,

where even your ingenuity will fail to discover—that might humble your *pride*, for guilt levels all distinction; there is no difference between forgerers, even although one may be garbed as a baronet, and the other wander homeless through life. The great and small are alike, when once the higher stoops to an act which would degrade the lower. Do you find this written in those large books, or must your pride be taught wisdom by an attorney?”

“Proceed, Rawlinson,” replied Sir Ronald, with great composure. “I am indebted to you for wisdom upon more points than one. If this is true which you have now averred, you have added a little more to my ancient lore, and taught me this:—that one man should never place confidence, even in the oath of another. We shall do no good by this foolish quarrel. I have done what you required; what more do you ask?”

“To humble your pride still more. Can I forgive this insult? ‘I called his pride to the rescue.’ Know this, de Lancy—for Sir Ronald de Lancy has yet a mystery attached to it—

remember this hint: that confidential agents know more of family secrets than family honour can brook. You are useful to me now, so I retain you. I have you in my net, through the meshes of which you can never escape. Now, hear me; whilst I lower your pride to the level I require—you shall marry my daughter yourself! She, who was too low of birth for your disinherited brother—too much beneath the pride of the younger son, shall be the wife of the heir who bears the title! What say you to this, de Lancy?"

"That you are intemperate, and wanting that coolness and discretion which has marked your character. It is impossible, without your imagination is heated, that the word pride could have at once made you enter on so mad a scheme. You must have prepared this coolness and pretended anger to seize at a shadow. I shall not imitate your example, and I shall not answer to your proposition until you may find it convenient to call before dinner."

"I understand the allusion," replied Rawlinson; "drunk or sober, I swear by heaven

that you shall marry my daughter ! You shall settle upon her the sum that I shall name ; and before to-morrow's sun goes down, the report shall be industriously circulated ;—that is settled, de Lancy. You know me as well as I know you ; we are both determined men ; but I have all to gain, you sufficient to lose ;—enough of this. What has become of Herbert ?”

“ How should I know ?” replied Sir Ronald.

“ You do know,” replied Rawlinson, “ and I know you do. Margaret was close to you when you interrupted the old fool in his babbling ; and after you dismissed your brother, she followed you towards the cliff, until, apprehensive that she must be discovered, she retraced her steps, waiting to meet Albert, who by appointment was to have met her there. She saw you return ; and although she waited until the second bell rang, when all gates are closed except to your intimate friend, myself, Herbert did not and has not returned. I dare say,” continued Rawlinson, with a searching look, “ the poor old fellow got so

close to the cliff, that he tumbled over accidentally, and will never again disturb us with a report of fire!"

Sir Roland's face underwent no change; there was a calmness over his features, which would have defied the scrutiny of a quicker eye than Rawlinson's. He answered in his usual measured tone :

"When he is weary of wandering, he will return. His age and long services render him a privileged man." Then starting a little from his usual reserve, he said, "He was the only one who could have betrayed us, Rawlinson; and such an accident as you surmise, although very dreadful, would not be so very disagreeable to either you or me."

"To you it might be serviceable, to me it is immaterial; indeed his life is precious to me in one respect, inasmuch as his evidence would tend to confirm mine."

"Yours, Rawlinson?" said de Lancy, as he slowly raised his eyes; "in what manner is your evidence to be given?"

"Merely in the event of your non-compli-

ance with my desire ; then I shall disrobe you of your grandeur, and turn you over, if not to the executioner, to a society in whose company abroad you may forget your pride ! I think it is Plato who says, ‘ Pride is always the companion of solitude.’ In the company of other felons you will shake off that unwholesome reserve !”

“ You have quoted a good old writer, Rawlinson ; I will quote you another : Isocrates, in inculcating the duties of a sovereign to Nicocles, has this passage—‘ Shew upon all occasions so high a regard for truth, that a single word from you may be more confided in than the oath of others.’ Now so little has this maxim been impressed upon your mind, that I tell you your oath is not so much valued by me as the merest assertion of the most perjured witness. If I am a villain, by heaven you are my master in the art.”

Having said this in his usual cold manner, he rose from his seat, turned the key in the door, placed it in his pocket, and resumed his seat.

“What do you mean, de Lancy, by this conduct?” said Rawlinson, his lips whitening gradually with apprehension. “Open that door, or I will make such a clamour that assistance shall come—and then——”

“Be calm, be steady, Rawlinson; follow my example, do not speak hastily. Now listen to me. Your death is requisite for my security; you are a villain in whom even another villain cannot repose confidence—the honesty among thieves is not conspicuous amongst us. Move but one inch, open but your mouth to call for assistance, and whatever may happen afterwards, you will never live to see. Now concerning this bond, this will, tell me where it is, and who knows of it? Mind my injunctions; you know my determination. One word of alarm, and this bullet is through your brains.”

“My death would not release you one moment,” said Rawlinson; “the murder would only hasten your end. This anger is useless; it will ruin both, where both might remain in security. The bond or will is in the keeping of another, closely sealed, enveloped in a paper

on which the whole transaction is recorded. I have directed that, in the event of my death, either by accident or design, these papers may be delivered to your brother; and more, some particulars of your birth are there! Put up your pistol; my death is your surest death, my life, the guarantee for yourself."

"You have not been a dull student in deceit, Rawlinson; you are the very prince of attorneys—a man whose wisdom in villainy would astound the most unrighteous. It appears, by your statement, that I am firmly in the net; but to live under such a fisherman would be to sport with the hook in my mouth. My coolness shall be my safeguard. This alternative I offer you: deliver up that original will, and I will marry your daughter; refuse it, and life being no longer worth having, I will follow old Herbert, but not before I have left enough evidence to convict you."

"I will deliver up that will to you under a bond, that a certain sum shall be paid to me. It shall be safely lodged in the hands of a third person, to be given you the moment the mar-

riage is celebrated. You will then be doubly safe ; for no parent would seek to impoverish his own child, more especially when he gains by her affluence."

" You have deceived me once, Rawlinson," slowly replied de Lancy ; " what security have I that this original document shall come to my hands ?"

" The security of my daughter, de Lancy ; this marriage renders both secure. I can then no longer threaten you ; you no longer can outwardly despise me."

" And my brother—what is to become of him ?"

" Easily managed. Do you tell him of your attachment to Margaret. I will arrange the rest."

" But your daughter loves him, Rawlinson ; how is her affection to be warped ?"

" Leave that to me ; to-morrow your proposition shall be made. She will not refuse it, and then the sooner these nuptials are celebrated, the sooner we shall be the better friends. Are you agreed ?"

“ I am ; and yet I cannot be agreed, even with myself. This is another act of injustice to Albert, who this day I began to make my companion. I was in hopes that, as I increased in years, I might make ample atonement to him for all the injustice I had committed ; that time and age might have taught me repentance and sorrow ; and that by doing that which was lawful and right, I might——”

“ Stop,” said Rawlinson ; “ if you begin, with a murder fresh upon your hands, to talk of prayer and your soul, I shall have no confidence in you. You cannot retrace your steps ; you must go on.”

“ You do me one injustice, Rawlinson,” replied de Lancy, quicker than usual. “ As I live here, I did not commit a murder upon Herbert. I led the old man to the cliff, abusing him for his babbling folly. It is true, I did keep him close to the precipice ; his old head turned giddy, and he fell into the boiling surf below. The insatiate wave soon must have torn the poor old man from his hold, even if he dug his fingers in the sand with more

than human strength ; the eddy which whirls beneath the rocky cavern must have drowned him, and long ere this his body has floated far far away. I never touched him."

"It is remarkably well narrated ; but gentlemen do not walk by precipices, on dark nights, without some intentions. Good night, remember to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

LEFT to himself, Sir Ronald had sufficient time to ponder over his situation. His pride had now received its fullest abasement; and as he thought the more seriously of his future life, he found himself in a vortex, from which there was no escape.

Sir Ronald had ever been treated as the elder son of his father; to him was to pass all the inheritance; and never had word escaped the lips of any which could breathe a doubt as to his legitimacy, until within a few months previous to his father's death. It was then Rawlinson began to ingratiate himself into favour—it was supposed “the worship of the

rising star." He was tolerated at first, and when sufficiently intimate, hinted a suspicion, which he did so guardedly, that it required an attentive ear to understand.

Ronald, although proud, was not without curiosity; and the more he attempted to check it, the more insidiously it worked its way, until at last it had so overpowered him, that he resolved to satisfy it.

This was precisely the net which had been spread for him by Rawlinson, who, if he knew little of the ancient world, was conversant enough with human nature. He had watched the trifling impatience of his victim to fathom, by artful questions, the depths of this secret will, and he had answered so guardedly, that the questioner became more eager to learn, without advancing a step, until the moment had arrived when his impatience broke through all restraint.

The secret was then communicated under an oath that it was never to be revealed, and Ronald became possessed of the astounding fact that he was illegitimate, although no stain

attached to the character of his mother, she, a natural child and under age, having, in total ignorance of the law, been married without publication of the banns, which, however, being discovered by Rawlinson's father, was by his advice so far remedied, that a marriage took place, which was succeeded by the birth of Albert.

The inheritance, therefore, rested upon the latter, for Ronald, by that law, was not legally born in wedlock, and was consequently deprived of that which he had ever believed his right. The secret, however, Rawlinson gave him to understand was entirely in his own keeping, the record of it having been transmitted to him by his father, who thus gave his son a kind of permanent hold upon the de Lancy family, capable of creating a very comfortable chancery suit, which, in those days, was a certain annuity to the attorney. So that Ronald thus found himself, at one fell swoop, deprived of everything; for his father had by his will (the contents of which Rawlinson well knew, for he had drawn it up) left one hundred

and thirty-five thousand pounds to Albert, which was the entire sum over and above the real property, which amounted to nearly fifteen thousand pounds per annum, and which was destined for Ronald, his father being led to believe that the secret had died with old Rawlinson, but who was much too good an attorney to allow his son to be ignorant of the fact.

The picture of absolute poverty, drawn and heightened by Rawlinson, the very idea of surrendering to his brother that immense fortune, which he had believed his own, led the proud Ronald to think dishonestly. Thinking and acting are near akin; we are told that he who looks after a woman with a wicked intent, has already committed adultery in his heart; and the man who entertains the slightest dishonourable idea, has broken through the barrier which religion and education had raised to repel crime.

Rawlinson had about this time become considerably embarrassed in his finances: he had lived far too fast; and although he had every chance of making money, owing to his rival

attorney being a remarkably litigious character, yet had vanity overcome prudence; and Rawlinson, a villain at heart, had gradually worked his way into the society of Ronald, with the intention of awakening his worst passions, of placing before him the sad event which must take place immediately the will should be disputed, and finally of leading Ronald on to think upon desperate means, whereby he might avoid this terrible end.

Words were at first industriously used to make Ronald aware that the secret would be safe; but that it was in Rawlinson's power, nay it was his duty, as the confidential adviser of the family, to put the rightful owner in possession. Still there were means of evading the law. In such artful manner, and with such palpable hints, he intimated that he was open to conversation upon the subject. Ronald, having determined to avail himself of any chance, proposed to the attorney a sum of money to bribe him into silence. The overture was rejected with scorn, merely, in truth, because the sum offered by no means came up,

in the attorney's opinion, to the price he deemed it worth.

“Consider,” said Rawlinson, “the risk of being even a party to this transaction—inevitable ruin if suspected, transportation for life if discovered. The man,” he continued, “who is to face either of these evils, must have sufficient money to enable him to decamp before he is routed, to retreat before he is made a prisoner ;—and four thousand pounds !—it would be mere beggary abroad—mere vegetation. Besides, my conscience tells me that even entertaining the subject itself is highly discreditable. It must not be ; Albert must inherit all, and you must be dependant upon his bounty.”

The pride of Ronald could not brook this. He at once descended to the meanness of supplication ;—the sum offered was doubled, trebled, and at last quadrupled. This last seemed to be the mark which Rawlinson required to be reached ; for he moderated the anger which he had at first evinced at being insulted even at the proposition of a bribe, to forego his ho-

nest intentions. He commiserated the situation of Ronald, used kind words, and apologised for him in regard to his feelings having bettered his intentions; and finally left the room, with an impression upon Ronald's mind that his obdurate honesty might, by gentle touches of all-subduing gold, be worn through, as the hardest stone yields to a succession of drops.

The ice was broken; honesty had fled, and villainy was triumphant. The following day was eagerly expected by both. The health of the father was hourly becoming more precarious; and it was, therefore, requisite that the plan should be arranged before his death. No alteration could be made in the will; for old Sir Ronald had fallen into the sear and yellow leaf of life, and his brain, like an autumnal tint, had been stripped of its manly verdure, and was blighted by the frosts of age. It is true, he occasionally rallied into remembrance, as his last speech evinced; and in that speech there seemed to be a latent hope that if Ronald paid his brother the large sum left him, Albert

would have been contented and happy in his lot.

The following morning arrived, and earlier than usual Rawlinson called. The door of the library (for this apartment had been for some time the undisturbed retreat of Ronald) was closed and locked ;—a false will produced—and Ronald, an adept at imitation, forged the name of his father,—so like, indeed, that Rawlinson uttered an involuntary exclamation of praise. The names of the witnesses were likewise forged ; and the whole deed so closely resembled the other, except in contents, that the very men who had attested the real one of the old man, might have, to the best of their knowledge and belief, sworn to the false, as the one they had attested.

This having been arranged, Ronald looked up, and remarked how pale and wan Rawlinson appeared.

“ It is my first fault,” said the villain ; “ and we all tremble as we overstep the Rubicon of crime. When once fairly placed upon the inclined plane, we shall slide along merrily ; and

conscience, the warder of the heart, will cease to be vigilant at its post. How do *you* feel?"

"Like a poor wretch, Rawlinson," replied Ronald, "who having in the cold and dreary winter, trodden down the snow with his bare feet, sees before him a cheerful fire to warm and comfort him, a bed to lie upon, and food and victuals. Such as must be the sensations of that poor wretch, who had starvation in the foreground, and perhaps a gallows in perspective, are mine at this moment. I care not for the crime; for I would rather die a rich thief than an honest pauper. Rawlinson, you cannot deceive me, any more than I can deceive myself. You feel a little remorse—a slight increased pulsation of the heart; but you feel a vast deal of pleasure; and when my father is dead, you will repent in a new carriage, and think of religion on a high trotting horse. But to business—my father's Will."

"It is here."

"Then place it *there*—I will bury it deeply in the flames," continued Ronald, "so that no prying eyes, no eager inquisitive varlet, shall

grope out a particle to treasure up as evidence. —Who is there?"

"It is me," said the poor old sick childish father. "Let me in; I am cold, and want some breakfast."

Rawlinson shuffled up the papers and parchments, and Ronald, struck by this extraordinary interruption, opened the door, and led his father in.

"Cold, very cold," began the old man; "but business must be done, and I want to count my money. Who is this?" he continued, as he observed Rawlinson; "he looks like a thief come to rob me. But I'll give it to thee, poor Ronald, I'll give you a hint. The man who leaves his affairs in the hands of another, is like a person deprived of both arms and eyes. But why does the nurse keep away? I've told her to give twenty pounds for my breakfast; and although I am rolling in riches, I can't get dry toast with my gruel."

At this moment, when the poor old man had just approached the fire, and had spoken this mixture of folly and of wisdom, the nurse came

running in. To Ronald's quick rebuke, she said, that she had left his father, thinking him asleep, to get something for herself, and that she supposed he had exercised the cunning of people in his situation, and had only waited her departure, to avail himself of the opportunity to walk about. "He must be cold," she continued, "for he is like a bare-footed beggar wandering in the snow."

Ronald started when he heard the words which he himself had expressed, and looked warily at Rawlinson. He was busy turning over the books, apparently indifferent to the conversation, the old man was removed, and the door again fastened.

"I cannot destroy the will now," said Ronald, "even I who planned the deed, am afraid to face it; he came upon us even in idiotcy like a ministering angel, which some have believed to watch over our lives, and guard us from temptation;—his very eye rebuked my intention; and," added Ronald with a peculiar curl of the upper lip, "he *mistook* you for a thief."

"What! frightened at a shadow, Sir?—Is

your deep reading, your fine philosophy to be shaken by a common place affair ? A sick man, anxious to avoid a bed in which he has been detained for a fortnight, finds himself at liberty, and walks to the room he mostly inhabited in health—is there any thing supernatural in that ?—any nonsense of ministering angel to whisper into one's ear to avoid a crime ? If that had been the case, why did he not interpose his authority, this ghostly authority, to stop your hand when you traced this forgery ? Do not think of it ; it is like a school boy who buys a wooden figure, and implores it to bring him good luck, and if he gets flogged for his idleness, he believes it the kind work of his Tommy.”

“ Let me go and see him in his bed, Rawlinson ; perhaps I may master this weakness, but as I live, I shake with fear, as much as if the officer of justice had arrested me, and the hangman had opened his sliding noose to receive this neck.—Wait here ; I will return in a moment ; let me see him in his bed, watched so that he may not again break upon our business,” and with a hurried step he departed.

No sooner was he gone, than Rawlinson carefully concealed the papers in his pocket, and returned to his house. Rawlinson's pale appearance was owing to his having spent the whole night in preparing the document which he could not entrust to his clerk, who had drawn up the original. His plan was well laid ; he had now his victim secured, and retired to his home, where he carefully concealed the deed, to which Ronald had affixed his father's signature ; having this safe, he avoided Raven Castle, and actually left his house for a week, with his daughter.

During this interval, he tutored Margaret to follow his wishes. Margaret was then but seventeen. She was not a beauty ; but she was fair, and exquisitely formed. She had appeared to have entertained an attachment for Albert—nay they had already exchanged vows, and declarations of affection ; but in youth, although the fire of love may burn fiercely, it may soon be quenched. Rawlinson knew his daughter to inherit his own feelings. She had read of great and rich men marrying beneath them,—

some their cooks, and many, play actors ; and although she did love, as much as such a girl could love, Albert, yet she was never one who would have dashed herself over the Raven Cliff to be carried away in the whirlpool below. Every hint which a careful father could instil into her mind, as to the benefits to be derived from riches, and the misery of poverty, Rawlinson had bestowed on his daughter ; and he had brought her now exactly to his wishes, namely a cool, calculating, cunning girl, who would sacrifice any poor lover, to make a more advantageous match.

“ Well, Margaret, my dear,” began her father, “ I wonder what your poor miserable lover will do in your absence ; he will write your name, I suppose, upon a tree, and sit under its shade, to look at all that is left of you ! Tell me, girl, do do you love him ?”

“ Yes,” replied Margaret, “ I suppose I love him, and it would be a great match for me.”

“ Not so, my child,” replied Rawlinson. “ By the bye, I have often thought of warning

you against this great match, as you call it ; but I could not be so indiscreet as to mention the terms of old Sir Ronald's will,—that would be a breach of trust, but I may venture to hint that, independent of the manly air, the upright honest bearing of the elder brother, he will be far richer, that is, he will inherit all the estates, monies, &c, and would be a match that half the nobility of England might covet."

" And being so rich, so upright, &c. papa, as you say, would not of course condescend to marry any one beneath him in rank."

" I scarcely think you are right there, Margaret, for it so happens that I know he is attached to you."

" To me ! it is impossible. I have never seen him more than twice in my life, and then he turned from me as if I had the leprosy."

" And not a bad proof of love either ; there are many men who become so much in love, that they dare not even look upon the face of her they most admire ; nay some, and one I know, as brave, and as gallant a man, as ever faced his country's enemies, who, when he

made a proposition of marriage turned his back upon the lady."

"I'm sure," replied Margaret, "I should have turned my back upon him. But is this true that Albert, when his father dies, will not share equally with his elder brother?"

"Child," replied Rawlinson, "it is never done; the elder son inherits all, and the younger ones are protected by him; it is one of the wisest laws, that of inheritance by primogeniture, which was ever framed; it keeps the name and the greatness of the family together; whereas a sub-division would impoverish all. I cannot help thinking but that Ronald loves you. Albert is sent to a friend in the Highlands, as you know, little Mischief! he went yesterday. The father may still live years; and until his death, his will must be unknown; however, I shall advise, should he not recover, that Ronald becomes the manager of the property, or that *I*, as a matter of business, should arrange the affairs. Now, Margaret, could you forget Albert and marry Ronald, if he should hereafter—I speak merely of a possibility—be

induced to make you a declaration of affection?"

"I must say that I should like," replied the girl, "to be the lady of Raven Castle: and Lady de Lancy would not sound amiss to my ears."

"You do not love him, Margaret?" said the attorney, with a smile.

"Not just yet," she replied; "but I am a good daughter, and I can do as I am bid."

It was a week before Rawlinson returned. Old Sir Ronald lingered on for more than six months, when on the 20th of December he died.

Two years had nearly elapsed from the time of old Sir Ronald's death, until the evening before-mentioned, when Ronald disturbed the conversation between Albert and Herbert. It will be seen, that Rawlinson, directly after the forgery, had planned the marriage of his daughter with the future baronet, and that she, although continuing her clandestine visits to Albert, was, from her careless educa-

tion, secretly not without hope that she might succeed in uniting herself with Sir Ronald.

The day old Sir Ronald died, a counterfeit copy of his will, with numerous papers, letters, records, &c., were destroyed by his eldest son and Rawlinson; and old Herbert's story of the fire was in strict accordance with truth. From that hour Ronald de Lancy had shunned mankind; he had endeavoured, in solitude, to shield himself from the tyranny of his own heart; he could not dive into society and dissipation, for his whole nature was against it. He who before was bold and proud, now slunk about his grounds, ashamed to meet his tenantry; anxious to avoid even his brother, he lived like a respited criminal, uncertain when the axe might fall; and although he turned his thoughts to religion, yet was his reading such as, if possible, to discredit it. Every page which could be twisted or distorted so as to render a conviction of atheism probable, he seized it, treasured it, and would

frequently say to himself: "If there is no hereafter, then am I happy!"

Amongst the people who sometimes gained an unwelcome admittance, was the Rev. James Molesworth: he had been old Sir Ronald de Lancy's youngest and oldest friend, and now clung with renewed affection to the unworthy representative of Raven Castle. He had observed the sudden change, this apparent religious melancholy which had crept over his old friend's son. Clergymen are privileged people, they approach armed with the words, "Peace be to this house, and all herein;" they heal the wounds of the bruised heart, and they give consolation where trouble and anxieties prevail.

The morning after Sir Ronald's conversation with Rawlinson relative to the marriage of his daughter, Mr. Molesworth called. He found Sir Ronald in his library, the Bible open, references at hand, and the reader pale with apparent study.

After the first salutation, Mr. Molesworth began, by observing:—"That there was a

time for all things, and that Sir Ronald injured his constitution, and impaired his health by his over-zealous search into the holy writings. Remember, my young friend," he said, "we are not to indulge in any occupation, however pleasurable, that ruins our health; and when so indulged, even a religious work becomes dissipation; for our health is given us, as a gift which we are bound to preserve; and the mind never can be so active when the body is enfeebled."

"Thank you kindly, Sir," said Sir Ronald, in his usual steady manner; "I may truly say, 'The labour we delight in physics pain.' I have not recovered, as yet, all the recollection of former happiness; and I feel as a weed thrown upon the wide Atlantic, to float with the impulse of the current."

"Pardon me, Sir Ronald, but I think you have not stated your case fairly; you do not go with the current, but you oppose it. The young baronet should not confine himself within his walls, hoarding his riches; your enjoyments of life would tend much to alleviate

the miseries of hundreds ; and again, although a clergyman, I am bound to tell you that the constant perseverance in such seclusion as yours would become criminal. The poor around you want your assistance, and if fortune has been propitious to you, your hand should be extended towards others."

" Whatever you demand for the poor, Mr. Molesworth, I am ready to advance ; name but the sum, and this instant it is yours."

" Charity, Sir Ronald, does not always consist in sending money ; it consists in visiting the fatherless and the widows in affliction ; and a boon from the hand of the man who owns the territory, is three times as consolatory, as when, as a matter of convenience, the money is sent through another. Do you imagine that the fakir who sits all day long until his nails grow through his hands, although he gives all he gets to the poor, is an acceptable person, in comparison with him who goes through the several duties of life, who sees the enjoyments of others, and who contributes to them by his presence ? You should marry, Sir Ronald."

“Marry!” responded Sir Ronald, in a deep sepulchral voice. “Before long, Mr. Molesworth, I shall require your services on that account.”

“Indeed!” said Mr. Molesworth, “that does rejoice me. Raven Castle will no longer be an inclosure; as in the feudal times, the old hall will resound with merriment; and I, being proud of the service committed to my charge, shall, when that ceremony is over, be as blythe and as gay as the youngest! If I do not trespass much upon my intimacy, may I ask the name of her who is so shortly to come amongst us?”

“Margaret Rawlinson.”

“What do I hear, Sir Ronald? Margaret Rawlinson!—the daughter of your attorney!—It is well your father sleeps under a heavy stone, or his old form might haunt the house, which thus can lower itself.”

“Tell me, Sir,” said Sir Rowland, “have the dead ever left their tombs to visit those on earth? or is it your opinion, that affection retains its hold, and acts as a ministering angel?”

“ It is a subject which I fain would evade, for no one can positively answer the question.—All nations have records of the dead having revisited the earth;—but it is a record, at which the philosopher laughs at in day-light, and dreads in darkness.—I have a favour to ask you. Fix upon any other member of our church to unite you ; I cannot, Sir Ronald,—I will not be the man.”

“ Your reason, Sir ?”

“ Your father would never have sanctioned such an alliance. He was proud of his rank, and of his partner’s rank ; and well I remember his scrupulous attention to some whim of hers, when he remarried her long after your birth.”

“ Ah !”

“ Yes, indeed, the registry is with me, for I performed the service. She, under her maiden name, went through the ceremony, dressed as a bride,—three persons only were present—myself, my clerk, and old Rawlinson; although, by some accident, old Herbert and others heard of the event. Little did old Rawlinson think, that a Sir Ronald de Lancy was .

to wed his grand-daughter ; and luckily I only survive to witness the degradation !—Good bye, Sir Ronald ! I was in hopes I could have withdrawn you from your seclusion ; but, old fool that I was ! I forgot that, even in seclusion, love is more dangerous than in the giddy whirlpool of pleasure.”

At this moment Albert entered the room. He announced the arrival of Rawlinson, who was as usual excessively anxious to see Sir Ronald.

“ He has brought the settlements for signature, I suppose, Sir Ronald,” said Molesworth, “ I will not witness them, and luckily Albert is under age. Good bye, good bye, Albert,—when your brother weds Margaret Rawlinson I must withdraw.—Heavens, how pale you look !”

“ It is nothing,” interrupted Sir Ronald, “ good morning Sir !—and with all the stateliness of manner for which he was noted, he bowed the reverend gentleman out of the room, and before he could pave the way for that which he knew would give his brother the keenest pain, the attorney made his appearance.

“ I am come to sign and to seal,” said Rawlinson.

“ Leave me,” said Sir Ronald, “ I will explain to you the nature of Mr. Molesworth’s remarks another time.”

“ I obey,” replied Albert ; “ but I have another message to deliver—Herbert is no where to be found—and some of the servants have asked leave to search for their old friend.”

“ Let them search,” was Sir Ronald’s reply.

“ My mind,” began Sir Ronald as his brother left the room, “ is fixed—I am prepared to wed your daughter—where is she ?”

“ Not far—your courtship need not be long—I have prepared her ; ask her hand—it is your’s ; return afterwards with me to my house—and then the settlements can be arranged.”

“ You are quick, Rawlinson, in your departure ; how many a poor lover sighs over the long days the law requires to bind him to all he holds dear ; whilst to me—the actual deeds are prepared in one short night, even before I have made proposals to the woman who is to be—not my love—but my wife !”

“ The world and you are differently placed—come, it must be done this day—we can walk—the long shrubbery will be the fittest place—poor old Herbert, Sir Ronald, will not overhear us—he sleeps quietly enough—and the search on the part of the court will be unavailing !”

From the terrace walk which skirted the flower garden of Raven Castle there ran a long winding shrubbery. The hand which planted this thick retreat had wound the path in such constant windings, that the eye could never command a view of more than fifty feet. In the little recesses occasionally formed by sharper turnings there were rustic seats, in summer sheltered from the sun, in winter protected from the breeze. There the lilac had been planted so as to overhang the seat, as if Flora would delight in it as a throne surrounded by the thick blossoms of this elegant tree and inhaling its beautiful perfume ; the next was overhung by liburnam, and Danae might fancy herself under a shower of gold ; in another the thickly flowering honeysuckle arched itself gracefully over the seat ; whilst the next, which

Margaret Rawlinson reposed upon, was in reality, 'Love amongst the roses.' Further on was another—the jessamine wound gracefully around it; the small white blossom looking like stars amid the bosom of the night. And thus each seat was centred in a bower—each bower being composed of only one kind of flower. The walk terminated with a gate; and the kindness of old Sir Ronald had confided a key to the family of the Rawlinson's, who had long been privileged to walk therein.

In this walk had the cold hearted Margaret often met Albert. Here had she plighted her truth to him; and on the very seat where she now sat had the flower of Venus often witnessed those sweet kisses which lovers imprint, and which, as a poet has described them, is a kiss of youth, and beauty, and love, all concentrated into one focus!—a hypocrite in her heart, she disguised her real feelings! and while she amused herself in fanning the flame which burnt brightly in young Albert's heart, her own beat with higher expectation; the hint which her father had given her weeks before, of the possi-

bility of becoming Lady de Lancy; the envy, the jealousy which such an union would infallibly produce in the Molesworth family—a family hated by the dishonest attorney, because their characters were so opposite—had not been lost upon Margaret. It is true, she did not love Sir Ronald; his tall gaunt figure—his natural austerity of manner—his cold measured mode of address, was not such as would win young hearts; and to this day, when past nineteen years of age, Sir Ronald had never deigned to enter into any conversation with her, beyond a few seconds in duration.

In the bower, which by Albert had been termed Venuses retreat, for he saw grace in all her steps and heaven in her eye, sat Margaret Rawlinson, awaiting Sir Ronald. She had been told by her father that an overture of marriage had been made by the baronet to him, for her. He pointed out in terms likely to captivate a heart like his daughter, all the advantages derivable from such an union.

Albert was a pauper—he must be discarded. Sir Ronald had wealth and a title, was the larg-

est possessor of property in that part of England. It was prudent to sacrifice a little love to a vast accession of wealth and power. She did not hesitate ; she agreed at once to marry him ; and she was now placed in this bower to receive his addresses. Her heart palpitated a little—not with love—but with hope !

Rawlinson had walked with Sir Ronald to the beginning of the shrubbery, and there left him, in order to find Albert, and prepare him for the event—if possible to poison his mind more strongly against his brother ; and, in despair, to leave him to meditate either a flight, or a personal rencontre—which would force Sir Ronald to find some employment for his brother elsewhere.

He found Albert instantly, and after a very few preliminary remarks came at once to the point, and hinted the connexion with the family about to take place,—“ They are now in the shrubbery,” he said,—“ but I must be home, for my time is much occupied.”

Albert for a moment stood like a statue ; a sudden thought seemed to overpower him ; and

he rushed into the thicket as if to shelter himself from the world.

As Margaret sat counting the minutes when her vanity should be gratified, her hope realized, she heard the slow steps of Sir Ronald advancing; his was not the light footfall of impatient love; but he lingered at every step, and was anxious to prolong the time before his tongue should bind him to marriage. He neither loved nor hated the object; she was perfectly indifferent to him. But his connection with Rawlinson required this security for himself; and well he argued that this marriage, which was a matter of necessity—might, by good management, become one of comparative happiness. “There is nonecessity,” thought he, “of attachment to ensure contentment; love is much stronger sometimes after marriage than before.” Whilst pondering on the emergency of the case, he turned the corner, and beheld his future wife reclining in the bower. She had evidently taken considerable care to show her figure to its greatest advantage, and fastidious indeed must the man have been who

could have seen that woman, and not acknowledged her beauty and her grace.

Margaret darted up as if unprepared for such interruption; and after bowing in a distant and reserved manner, seemed anxious to avoid Sir Ronald, and not intrude upon his privacy. He, however, was not deceived by this manœuvre. Rawlinson had told him where to find his daughter, and he had had sufficient experience of his future father-in-law to know, that she had been ably tutored, expected the offer, and was ready to accept him.

With more than usual activity of manner, Sir Ronald sprang forward, and took her hand, which she, with admirable surprise, attempted, yet did not accomplish,—to withdraw. Here was no hesitation in Sir Ronald's manner, for there was no love to agitate him; he spoke to her with the ease and familiarity of an old acquaintance; and leading her back to the seat she had forsaken, he paid her but an honest compliment when he remarked that the bower received new beauties from the graceful form which adorned it.

So well managed was the interview by Sir Ronald, that even Margaret was deceived into liking him. He spoke with vivacity and elegance. He inquired into her occupations and amusements ; rallied her on her nocturnal rambles with her brother ; and so completely won her wavering heart, that they might have mistaken themselves for lovers.

Still Sir Ronald felt the indelicacy of his situation, to offer his hand after a quarter of an hour's conversation, seemed precipitate ; and he was more than once inclined to withdraw without effecting his purpose. The idea of his personal security in this marriage, however, prevailed over his prudence, and he now approached the subject by endeavouring to find out if Margaret, in reality, was attached to his brother.

“ You meet him frequently,” he remarked, “ Miss Rawlinson, and he poor fellow wears but a sad countenance when occupied elsewhere.”

“ Poor boy,”—remarked the artful girl, “ it would be too ridiculous, Sir Ronald, to fall in love with one so young,—as a companion he is

cheerful—and perhaps I may have been fortunate enough to amuse him ; but as to love—that is absurd !”

“He is too young, Miss Rawlinson—altogether too young, to form any alliance. Besides his fretful temper, his want of any occupation in life, and more than all, is want of fortune, his much against any connexion, such as marriage.”

Margaret smiled at the last word, and added, “That such an idea as uniting herself with the proud family of Sir Ronald de Lancy, never had entered her imagination.”

“And yet,” interrupted Sir Ronald, “one so beautiful, so graceful as Margaret Rawlinson might aspire to any hand. I should have thought our family honoured by such an acquisition ; and if Margaret Rawlinson could bestow herself upon such an unworthy object as myself, this hand is hers !”

Margaret remained silent, Sir Ronald became gradually warmer in his supplications. The bashful maiden still observed a guarded silence ; until the question was put in plainer language, and at last a timid consent was expressed. Sir

Ronald now was about to take what is seldom withheld from accepted lovers ; he drew the apparently unwilling girl to his arms, and in the act of imprinting a warm kiss—for Sir Ronald's blood had really warmed—he was thrust rudely back by his brother, who stamping on his prostrate rival, vented his curses and his kicks in concert.

“ It is done,” he said as he bestowed his last malediction, “ may heaven hear my curses!—you have deprived me of the girl I loved ; you have, I am certain, swindled me of my just inheritance—you have lighted my youth—crushed my affection—made me a pauper—and, worse than all, an enemy ! days and nights may roll over your head—your family may prosper—you may revel in your riches ; but, by that God who hears me ! no time shall ever reconcile me to the basest of brothers, no soft words shall win me back to you—but I will follow your path, and cross it where I can ; and when most in security, you shall feel the scorpion sting which blighted hope alone can inflict!—Good bye, Margaret ! but not for ever ! you, poor, weak

thing! won by ambition—deceived by deceit—look at your husband—who is to be—on the ground! his brother's foot upon his neck!—and thus I dismiss you both!”

As he finished these quickly uttered words, he caught up his brother's purse, which hung from his waistcoat pocket, and rushing from both the ungrateful girl and still more ungenerous brother, he hastened to his apartment, and making the most portable package he could contrive, disappeared from Raven Castle.

No sooner had he left his brother, than Rawlinson arrived. He had seen it all,—he had witnessed the rude assault and the theft.—He had rightly calculated upon the hasty revenge of Albert; his joy was unbounded, he rubbed his hands in ecstasy; and lifting the prostrate Sir Ronald, he took his daughter's hand, and walked towards the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

No sooner had Sir Ronald recovered from the assault, than Rawlinson poured the tide of advice as to future conduct.

"We have him now, safe, de Lancy," he said; "his blood is too good to brook the taunts and revilings which are attached to one who has committed a theft. Margaret saw it, and she could witness against him. I will meet him now, and irritate him to depart. In the meantime," he continued, as he whispered in Sir Ronald's ear, "you can avail yourself of the moment to arrange your future marriage. Remember, it must be soon."

Rawlinson found his intentions useless.

Albert had taken flight. The disorder in which his room was left indicated the suddenness of his departure ; and from a paper found on the table, which contained only these words —“ Follow not the steps of a desperate man,” —it was imagined that he would not return to interrupt the ceremony of his brother’s marriage.

Sir Ronald was allowed but a few days to make his arrangements. Rawlinson undertook the settlements himself, being one of the trustees. A clause in these deeds enabled Margaret to will away a certain part, even from the children which might be born ; but this clause had been omitted during the time Rawlinson read over the deed previous to his signature. The poor dupe of this treacherous ally was desired to make preparations on a grand scale. It did not suit the intentions of Rawlinson for his daughter to be smuggled into Raven Castle. The whole county must witness the ceremony ; and there in the full face of all, should the ceremony be performed.

As the time grew shorter, Sir Ronald ap-

peared to grow more animated ; the natural austerity of his character seemed to give way before a lightness of heart which had long been a stranger to him. The fact was, that Sir Ronald considered himself secure ; and as not a word had been received concerning Albert, he concluded that, relieved of him for the present, Herbert for the future, Rawlinson satisfied, his daughter united, that henceforth the only interruption to his happiness might be the watchful interference of his father-in-law.

Many and many were the people invited to the nuptials ; and although many accepted the invitation, yet one family steadily refused—it was that of Mr. Molesworth. This worthy labourer in the vineyard of Christianity would not countenance a union which was in every way repugnant to his feelings of respect for the de Lancy family. Rawlinson had long been considered an unworthy member of society : and more than once he had been strongly suspected of dishonest dealings in parish matters by the worthy rector. Between them some words of a disagreeable tendency

had passed ; and although Mr. Molesworth, with the urbanity of manner which always distinguished him, saluted the attorney—for he quarrelled with no man—yet that salute was the only interchange of civilities between them.

The living Mr. Molesworth held was the gift of old Sir Ronald ; and so undisguisedly did he mention his disgust at the union, that he offered to relinquish his flock, his house, his peaceful abode, and retire upon the small fortune he had saved for his children, rather than be doomed to see Margaret Rawlinson united to a de Lancy.

His only son was about the age of Albert ; and until love weaned him from his friendship, Albert had been his constant companion. His youngest daughter, a girl of only seven years of age, had been christened, to meet the fancy of the old baronet, by the name of Ronald ; in fact, the families had been associated for years. But that association was at once destroyed when Margaret Rawlinson was declared to be the future bride of de Lancy ; and Albert

had fled from Raven Castle with the taint of theft upon his hands.

In spite of all objections—for objections only made Sir Ronald more determined, the day was fixed for the 23rd of December (1787). The ceremony was to be followed by the festivities of Christmas; and old Herbert, had he been there, might have believed that the nuptials of the young baronet would recall the good old days of revelry at that season, when the old year shakes hands with the new, and ungrateful man rings the same peal for the departed friend of 365 days, that he welcomes a new and uncertain period of his future existence, which may be fraught with all the ills and evils to which we are subject in this life. It is like the death of a king, when all his subjects go into compulsory mourning; and whilst the hearse and the nodding plumes, the pageantry, the useless folly of bedizening a coffin in which moulders and rots a poor piece of departed royalty, the sycophant, and all who crowd a court are, with smiles on their faces, and insincerity on their lips, lisping out,—“the

king is dead,"—"long live the king!"—so do we ring out the old year with joy, and ring in the new one with the same merry peal.

All of the sombre melancholy which distinguished Raven Castle was removed;—new furniture was supplied where the old had faded—a gorgeous display of plate, which had passed from father to son, and which yet weighed heavily in the scale of grandeur; new liveries were prepared, new equipages bought; and before the day fixed for the nuptials, the arms of the de Lancys, and those of the attorney, Rawlinson, were emblazoned on the panels of the carriage.

Rawlinson was not an inactive spectator of these preparations; he was now about to work out his masterpiece of plot. With a candour which quite astonished Sir Ronald, he asked him to whom he should confide the original will?

"Name any one," he said; "I will place it in his hands; and the hour after your marriage it shall be delivered to you."

"This confidence re-assures me, Rawlinson.

Our mutual safety will be secured by the marriage ; and the destruction of the proof against me will render me more happy."

" It is your evident increase of affection for my child, which makes me offer the deed without your request," replied Rawlinson ; " and did not common prudence warn me of the necessity of being careful, I would destroy it now."

" What ! do you fear my wavering in regard to my marriage ? the day is fixed—only two days from this ; all preparations are made—the company invited."

" Aye, but the ring is not on—the license is not bought—Margaret Rawlinson is not as yet Margaret de Lancy. We are told that all things are uncertain ; the mind of man ever wavers, Sir Ronald, and the prudent man never believes a deed complete until the signature and the seal are affixed. But my happiness in seeing my aim nearly completed almost has blinded me to a fact which has reached me—Herbert is alive !"

" Alive !" ejaculated Sir Ronald, " what an-

gel could have borne him up? There never yet was cattle or dog that toppled over the Raven cliff, and lived! And can an old infirm man, a man verging on a natural death, whose miserable limbs and joints could barely support the frame which tottered as he walked, tumble from that rugged point in the boiling well below, and be rescued? It cannot be, Rawlinson; you have, with a master hand, touched the strings, to see how inharmoniously they can jar, when the touch is not in unison with the mind."

"I tell you, he lives—and far from here. I have traced him by accident. A friend of mine, residing in Cornwall, mentions an old man who has come to reside with a brother, who speaks of his being unkindly discharged by Sir Ronald de Lancy. My fears made me suspect. I sent one down who knew him, and he lives!"

"What if he does? he knows nothing which can rise up against us. Bound together by this union—the deed destroyed—Albert gone—where, no one knows—all—all tends to

favour us. A few years will rid us of Herbert, and then, Rawlinson, we may revel in security."

"You are wrong about Herbert; but be assured he can injure us deeply. He was present at the re-marriage of your father, and at that time when busy babblers inquired why a re-marriage should take place—for men are generally satisfied with the parson's first blessing—old Herbert was heard to say that something must be wrong, or old Sir Ronald, the good and the just, would never thus attempt to cast a slur upon his lady, by making it requisite to have a new marriage. If you were married and the original will destroyed," continued Rawlinson, with a suspicious sneer, "you would not be in such a hurry to repair an illegality in the first proceeding; but would, I dare say, with most pious melancholy countenance, regret the evil, and separate yourself from it."

"You do me, perhaps, some injustice," replied Sir Ronald, evidently much hurt at the manner this imputation on his honour and ho-

nesty had been cast ; but he continued—" Human nature has ever been prone to attribute to others the same meanness which lurks in our own breast—this deed—this d——d deed—I will have placed in Mr. Molesworth's hands to be given me on the day of our marriage."

" With all my heart," replied Rawlinson ; " although I hate that fellow, for his over zealousness, yet I have no objection to his being the holder. The deed shall be sealed up, so that his old eye cannot penetrate the secret ; curiosity, you know, made Eve transgress, and man was easily persuaded to gratify the same desire ; but remember Molesworth remarried your father—do you think he never inquired the reason of this strange unusual transaction?"

" He knows nothing about it, for if he had," remarked Sir Ronald, " he would have given me a hint when he advised me not to tarnish the honour of our house by an alliance with yours "

Rawlinson bit his lip with vexation and remarked, " That viper I will yet scotch ! I had long since done it, but that the old man is so

meek and lowly in appearance—so apparently kind to the poor—and so reverently civil to his neighbour, that the clamour against the action would set all the crows and daws of the parish, with outstretched beaks, bellowing vengeance. My time will come.”

“What would you do,” asked Sir Ronald, “against one so honest, so respected? I tell you, Rawlinson, I would with pleasure strip myself of my vast possessions, if I could but change or decay away the upbraidings of conscience which for ever tear me to death—if by a sacrifice of property, I could obliterate the deeds; but I am placing a poisoned dagger in your hands with which I know full well you will hereafter wound me.”

“Beggars, Sir Ronald, always say they would give the whole world for a thing they covet;—it is easy to offer what is not beggars’ to give. So you may say as to the splendid offering of your wealth. I could save you the trouble of the gift; but that I require some of it myself. But to a subject nearest both our hearts, the marriage. The settlements are here—

my daughter waits—my clerk is in attendance—let us no longer trifle away time—I will call them in—and we can sign and seal.”

“Let me run my eye over the deed,” said Sir Ronald.

“Have you not heard it read by me,” interrupted Rawlinson, “do you suspect me of wishing to alienate the wealth of another?—am I in borrowed plumage?—can any one pluck me of my golden feathers and leave me a naked creature unable to live—and unable to fly?—I’ll ring this bell with your permission, Sir Ronald.”

The bell was rung, the servant told to summon the party—and the settlements were signed. Rawlinson was the trustee for his daughter, and young Molesworth, then about twenty-two years of age, was nominated for Sir Ronald. The attorney, with accustomed precision folded up the document—some red tape was wound round it—the whole was delivered to the clerk—and all but Rawlinson, his daughter and Sir Ronald had departed.

“Then to-morrow,” said Sir Ronald, “Mar-

garet, I shall claim you as a bride! Tell me, my love, have you prepared every thing you wish removed? Your bridesmaids, are they summoned? and now I think of it, Margaret, in all our conversations about this important step in both our lives, you have never mentioned the names of those fair ladies who are to stand near you at the marriage—nay, do not blush so? there surely is no impropriety in the question; and I would not for the world call up the blood upon your cheek to testify an incivility on my part.”

“Heavens help us!” said Rawlinson as he rose to depart. “I fancy the Baronet, Margaret, has cast aside his books of deep learning, and has been busy with the art of love. I will leave you for the present. Indeed, I shall not be wanted again until to-morrow. The license is prepared. Sir Ronald’s gallantry has not forgotten the ring, and to-morrow, Margaret, I shall congratulate you as Lady de Lancy.”

“You dine here to-day, Rawlinson,” said Sir Ronald. “I expect the clergyman and some of our distant country friends to dinner;

and some accident might render it requisite to delay their departure, in which case, when I am gone, you must do the honours of the house. You must, therefore, be made acquainted with them—I shall expect you?”

“It is inconvenient, Sir Ronald,—I had wished to have spent the last evening with my favourite Margaret. I hardly like to part with such a treasure now; but as it conduces to your happiness, my daughter, and will I trust increase your’s, Sir Ronald, I must give up all personal gratification to forward the happiness of both. But I cannot dine with you to-day. At the breakfast, to-morrow, you can introduce me; and accustomed to the world and its ways I shall not be long in making myself mighty agreeable—good morning.”

“Is it not a general practice, my dear girl,” said Sir Ronald, “for the bridegroom to make some small presents to the bridesmaids? The time is short, I own, for the commission; but I think it can be managed. What think you, dearest?”

“Your liberality is so great, Sir Ronald,

that I could not trespass upon it. Presents are not unfrequently made; and it is true my bridesmaids, who are not in very affluent circumstances."

"The more reason why the good custom should not be abandoned. How proud I shall be, Margaret, when to-morrow I see you dressed in your bridal attire;—that beautiful figure doing ample justice to the milliner's art—this rosy lip, which love invites to kiss (nay, dearest Margaret, it is an accepted lover's privilege; do not withdraw from me as if I were a viper—and faith I will ascertain your forgiveness, by stealing another) lisping out the words that you will be mine, until death us do part. Then shall I feel a joy to which I have long been a stranger, and find my life worth preserving, since I am to share the blessing of yours. I have the wedding ring here, Margaret; let me see how it will look, with this guard—nay, now this is unkind. How can I tell if it will fit you, if you refuse me the trial of its exactness."

After some little struggling, and some small

persuasion, the coy damsel allowed the amorous baronet to fit the ring, and then to kiss the hand which graced it; and here in this intoxicating moment of love Sir Ronald's heart was lightened of its load, and pleasure sparkled in his eye. The intellectual countenance of the baronet, lit up as it were by the torch of love and pleasure, appeared handsome in the eyes of Margaret. She looked upon him with tenderness, and even forgot her own meanness in the moment of love.

The arrival of the clergyman was a hint to Margaret to withdraw. She retraced her steps through the shrubbery, had already passed the bower in which the declaration was made, and was hurrying onwards towards the small gate which led to her father's house, when, on passing one of the many turnings which intervened, her progress was arrested by a man whose face was carefully concealed, and who, in the darkness of the evening—for it was five o'clock, and in December,—stood before her as a stranger. At first Margaret believed herself accidentally met by one of the visitors at the

castle, who had been invited to the wedding. She bowed and endeavoured to pass, but she felt herself withheld.

“Unhand me, Sir,” she said, “or I shall request Sir Ronald to resent this imprudence.”

“Hear me, Margaret,” said Albert, as he cast aside his disguise: “this cold evening—this threatening lowering weather will keep my brother from venturing beyond his house. I have returned to see you for the last time, to hear from your own lips your consent to this marriage. Be not afraid, Margaret; I love you too sincerely to harm you; you once taught me to love you, when, arm in arm through these dark shrubberies, we talked of days reserved for us in happiness, and when I, believing the words which came from your lips in apparent sincerity, imagined that one day Margaret Rawlinson would be my bride. For days I have been concealed. I heard that to-morrow was the day fixed to crush my hopes. I come for a confirmation of the event, and then farewell for ever! I will never intrude my

downcast countenance to mar your pleasure, or ever by my presence rebuke you for your inconstancy. Is it true, Margaret? If you can, for heaven's sake deny the libel on a woman's character, and stand before me the angel I have ever believed you!"

"Why cannot you," said Margaret, "return to the castle? All that is passed will be forgotten. I will contribute to cheer your life. A liberal allowance shall be made to you; your brother shall be reconciled to you."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Albert, "you do but evade an answer which you dare not give. Tell me, Margaret, were you not, as far as words and promises bind us in the world, mine?"

"I was, Albert; I confess it. But my father would not listen to so imprudent a match. On what could we subsist? Besides, your youth and inexperience were insuperable objections; and when I urged him to consent, he answered, 'Albert is a nice boy, but boys make bad husbands.'"

"And you, yielding to your father's opinion,

sacrificed your affection for me, and consented to marry my brother?"

"I did," replied Margaret, firmly.

"And you will not feel depressed in spirits when you know that your conduct has influenced mine. From this moment, I tear myself away! But, as I live, the unnatural brother who has deprived me of my love, and the unfeeling woman who has sacrificed it, shall find in Albert de Lancy a never sleeping enemy! Love, when neglected, we are told, turns to bitter hatred; and though at intervals I am aware your figure will rise before me, and the many happy moments we have spent be recalled with fondness to my memory, yet will I banish them with a curse, or remember them only to increase my bitterness."

"You talk wildly, Albert. Have I done wrong to follow a parent's injunctions?"

"Shall I do wrong, if I follow the dictates of nature?"

"It is unnatural to harbour hatred against a brother and a sister."

“ Is revenge unnatural ? Is it not implanted in our nature ? ”

“ Are we not taught to forgive our enemies ? ”

“ Is it not said, ‘ an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ? ’ ”

“ Is it not written, ‘ do good to them which spitefully use you ? ’ ”

“ Can you, Margaret, hope, by this quotation of Scripture, to silence the throbbings of my heart ? I loved you—I love you—beyond all love ! When I was ill-treated, I came to you, and your fondness healed the wound ; when scoffed and despised, you listened, and you comforted me ; when all around appeared to hate me, you alone professed to love me. Did I do wrong in loving her who thus assuaged my misfortunes ? Could I believe her otherwise than a guardian angel ? And when I thought my future life should be shared with her, can I help feeling a revenge within me, when I see the only being the earth contained, on whom I founded a hope of happiness, torn from me—not by one on whom I could have

wreaked a summary vengeance—not by a stranger smitten with her charms—but by a brother, one who told me to have more pride than to marry the daughter of an attorney, and then marries her himself!”

“ It is useless, Albert, thus to continue. I know you loved me, and I feel it ; but the die is cast, and I must abide the throw. I cannot retract when the ring is placed on my finger. Even now the clergyman who is to unite us is under your brother’s roof ; from the distant parts of the county those friends who are to honour us by their company are arrived. I should, by changing my mind, entail a ridicule for ever upon your family. Besides, Albert, if reason could guide you now, how soon might your prospects appear to brighten. I could persuade your brother to forward your views—to place you in a proper position in life. Whereas, if I married you, I should place a mill-stone round your neck, which would, however much you might struggle, sink you to the bottom. Be advised ; appear to-morrow at the wedding—wear a cheerful countenance.

Forgive me for having violated my word to you, and I will prove how sincerely I love you, by the good I will effect in your situation in life."

"Hear me, Margaret—listen to me, as I kneel at your feet! I have, in poverty, it is true, offered you my hand, and you have accepted it. Tell me, before I go distracted, can no persuasion induce you to fly with me? Nay, Margaret, do not start so! Your father will be reconciled, when it will be useless to continue an opposition. Nature will move the heart towards a daughter; and trust me, you will be happier with one who loves you, than in the wavering disposition of a man, who one moment will caress, the next despise you. This moment, Margaret,—now—let us fly—and——"

"Never!" interrupted the girl, "never, Albert; my mind is irrevocably fixed upon the marriage, and to-morrow I shall be your sister."

"Never will I believe it, Margaret, until I see it! and even then, shall doubt my eyes

and my ears. Once again, let me persuade you, entreat you."

"It is useless—I must retire. The wind is piercing cold, and my father awaits me. Hark! there is six striking; it will be difficult to frame an excuse for this unusual absence.—Good night."

"Not thus, Margaret, must we part! I have known you long, cherished you fondly. Not even now, when I feel the devil rising in my breast, can I consent to such a cold and formal salutation. Here is a ring, Margaret,—it was my mother's. I was young when she died; but I remember her last injunction was to preserve it carefully, as it might one day serve me. Oh, that the spirit of her who reared me in all tenderness would come from her resting place on high, to move you in accordance with my wishes! Take it, Margaret, for my sake; wear it, and be as bright an ornament to your sex as was my poor dear mother! And surely, Margaret, you might bestow upon me one kiss—the last I shall ever covet. Come, dearest girl, let us part in all

fondness—with all kindness one towards another.”

“ I cannot, Albert, I cannot,” replied the girl, and breaking from him, neither accepted the ring, nor gave the parting kiss.

“ She is gone !” said Albert, as he watched the object he once so much loved ; “ gone !—without even one parting press of that hand I have so often held in mine—no last word of tenderness or of hope—but a kind of sullen determination for ever to forget me ! And I must bear it all ; here in these cold shrubberies must I walk, like an unquiet spirit, to quiet my own heart ; for here how often have I walked with her ! This bower I reared because she one day spoke of the jessamine as a favorite flower, calling it a bright star in the bosom of the night, and likening it to the modern lady, who shines most when evening throws a darkness over all ! I could root it up for vengeance sake, but that the changing disposition of her heart, perhaps, would never miss it. Now could I but find old Herbert, and make him the sole depository of my plan,

I should feel more at ease. But he was missing in a strange manner; and yet who could accuse my brother? I am unfit for reason, and could better herd with men as mad as myself. Aye, the bell again—the summons to the table; there will be joy and revelry—speeches from the lip, and not from the heart—words of welcome—the place which I should fill, filled by a stranger; and when, perhaps, some one of the company who may have known me in happier days, should inquire of me, the answer will be warm and affectionate! there will be regret at my absence, whilst the devil would be more welcome at that board than myself! Of all life's miseries, excepting the continual blotting out of one's friends from the book of life, and the fear of being the last to linger in solitude, there is none greater than that of brooding over misfortunes, occasioned by the kindness of one's family—those are the real restless creatures who kindly manage every one's concerns but their own, and tell you that love is well to amuse youth, but that discretion and prudence are the children of age and expe-

rience. I will see this wedding, and then I will plunge headlong into the world, and leave chance to extricate me. And now to enquire concerning Herbert."

CHAPTER V.

THE morning broke darkly; the weather was windy, murky, rainy. Sir Ronald rose from his bed but half satisfied with the restless slumber he had stolen. This day was to seal his fate—either to be the man of large fortune, wedded to the daughter of his bitterest foe, or to fall from his high estate, and allow the brother he had so shamefully spurned to fill his proper chair! The company arrived—a breakfast was prepared; there seemed joy and contentment on every face. Even Sir Ronald's fixed, determined countenance relaxed a little of its severity; and he occasionally ventured a joke, which, however well imagined, seemed in his deep hollow voice, like the jest of a condemned criminal before execution.

Amongst this party was young Molesworth ; the father, although he refused to countenance the match, did not prevent his son from enjoying the day's entertainment. Besides, he had ever been the friend of Albert, and was now Sir Ronald's trustee. Some days had elapsed since Molesworth and Albert had met, and he was the more anxious to see him, to glean from him some account of this extraordinary alliance which the elder brother was about to make. A succession of company arrived—but there was no Albert.

At last, bedizened in all the nonsense of the bridal dress, appeared Margaret and her father. With the bride came two bridesmaids, one fairer than the bride in face and form, whose large blue eyes were brightened with astonishment at the splendour of the scene around her. She was a friend of Margaret Rawlinson, who had resided in Cornwall for some years. Young she was, for fifteen years had hardly passed over her ; yet being a plant of quick growth, had early become a woman. She alone was

the sole depository of Margaret's heart ; they had, when young, been much together, and there grew up between them a more than feminine friendship.

They were, in all respects, different : Laura Mackenzie was all heart, sincerity, affection ; Margaret was cold, calculating, reserved ; Margaret was a dark beauty, with a peculiarly well-shaped profile ; the other was a smiling Hebe, better seen in front. There was a playful good-humour on her lips, whilst on those of Margaret there was a compressed kind of determination. Laura had the pouting lip of kindness and benevolence, the other the thin expression of care and reserve. Sir Ronald started when he was introduced to her ; but the flush which covered his sallow countenance soon passed away, and he appeared formal in his manner ; he welcomed her, however, warmly.

The clergyman was the first to suggest, that if all were present who were expected, it were better to proceed with the ceremony. There

was at this time an awful change over the features of Sir Ronald; his sallowness became horribly deeper, whilst on the ruddy face of Rawlinson there was an air of pride and satisfaction no one could mistake. He led his daughter by the hand. She had never lifted her veil; and if at that moment some pang of regret was manifested by the tear in her eye, no one could discern it. Perhaps at that moment she viewed, with a natural horror, the man to whom she was about to be married; for depraved and hardened must that heart be, which failed to feel some remorse at the misery it had occasioned another.

Margaret was neither blind nor foolish; she was well aware that no affection prompted her to this alliance. It was the ambition of her father which had instilled the feeling of pride in her heart; the magnificence which was to be hers had overcome the love which, in spite of herself, still lurked about in favour of Albert. She walked to the altar firmly; but her companion, the meek and lovely Laura, trembled visibly. To her, this service was not one

of little moment ; she considered it an awful step in a woman's life, and as her eyes scanned the gorgeous scene around her, she thought that happiness and contentment required not all the meretricious decorations which seemed like gilding a sepulchre ; for when she looked at the moving anatomy, Sir Ronald, it was hard indeed for even fancy to dress him as a bridegroom, and to render him an idol worthy of love.

The previous arrangements, such as placing the bridegroom and the bride, being completed, the clergyman began the ceremony. The church, in which it was to be performed, was larger than is generally under the roof of the largest mansions. It had a gallery, supported by large pillars. There was likewise an organ of some value. Around the walls were tablets on which the lapidary had deeply engraven the virtues of the de Lancy family ; over each was the achievement, which had been placed on the house to warn the passer by that a great person was no more. Foolish pride ! for if one were really good, the doleful news would

reach the farthest friend without this decoration of woe; and if bad, the sooner the earth covers over him who has disgraced his being, and left behind him the worst example, the better. A total oblivion is preferable, than showing vice to have been blessed with riches and luxuries.

In the chapel there might have been about forty persons. The household servants, (all of whom had long resided in the family, and were now about to be changed, for Lady de Lancy disliked all servants who might have known too much) were present; but there seemed no intruders.

The clergyman had proceeded to the part—“Let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace,”—when the voice of Albert was heard, as he came from behind one of the pillars, and said:

“I forbid these banns!”

It was uttered not in haste or in anger, but in a slow determined voice.

The clergyman instantly stopped; but Rawlinson advanced and whispered that poor Al-

bert was subject to slight insanity, and had believed that his daughter was in love with him. "Allow him," he continued, "to pass unnoticed, and proceed. There can be no objection to the union. I am her father ; Sir Ronald, you know, is unmarried."

Sir Ronald looked round with a glance of reproach, but said not a word ; whilst Laura, astonished at the interruption, raised her veil, and looked at Albert. Their eyes met ; there was in Laura's the expression of pity. She had been told by Margaret that she anticipated this interruption, for that Albert had not left the neighbourhood. That look of Laura silenced at once the reproach Albert had destined for his brother. He stood, as it were, bewildered ; whilst the clergyman, satisfied of the words of Rawlinson, for they were conclusive, continued the ceremony.

The ring was given—the marriage complete. The daughter of Rawlinson was the wife of the proud Ronald de Lancy. The cheers of the tenantry, who were regaled with unusual profusion, resounded through the church. The

whole company had departed ; but Albert remained. Slowly and cautiously, when all had retired, he advanced to the spot on which his brother had knelt, and there, with uplifted hands and maniac mind, he swore to be revenged upon him who had blighted his hopes for ever ! And yet, in all his worst imprecations, he called upon heaven to bless her who had thus deserted him ! Rising from the cushion on which he had knelt, he kissed the altar, and said aloud :

“ I go, just heaven, to keep my vow ! ”

He turned to depart, but was interrupted by Laura.

“ This is no place,” she began, “ to tell the purport of my coming ; pass but the door, and I will be a faithful messenger.”

Fascinated by the voice—the meek and humble voice of Laura—Albert retired from the church towards the room in which the company were assembled. He stopped, however, directly he heard the sound of voices, and Laura began,

“ I come, Mr. de Lancy, from Lady de Lancy, to request you will forget the past, and join in the gaiety around us. She has made me acquainted with all the circumstances. Your brother is softened ; for he could not refuse the first request of his bride ; and he promises you a sincere and affectionate welcome, and to forward you in any path of life you may select.”

“ I cannot, fair young lady, accept even from your lips the reconciliation they have offered. They could not have selected one whose angel features were more likely to succeed. But on that altar from which you saw me arise, I have sworn an oath from which no time shall ever absolve me. The die is cast, and I must abide the throw. My brother has been a serpent in my path ; he has stung me, as I folded him to my breast, at the very moment when he pretended to have overcome his dislike to solitude ; and even to me—he was preparing for me, whilst presenting to my lips the chalice of intoxicating pleasure, the bitterest

dregs of misery. I have drank it—I have drained it of its last drop! But vengeance shall be mine! I swear——”

“Stop, Sir,” said Laura, her eye kindling with animation, “let me not hear your oath, I came as the messenger of peace; surely you have more kindness than to wish me to return the harbinger of discord. Margaret has requested you to consider that now her marriage is celebrated, that she urges you not by former affection, which she must forget, but by a sister’s claim, to relinquish all that useless passion which renders her miserable, and must leave you in poverty.”

“Tell her, fair lady, for as yet I am unacquainted with your name;”—“It is Laura Mackenzie,” she interrupted—“That I forgive her,—I bear no enmity against her; her happiness and welfare I have prayed for, and yet I own I have neutralized the prayer by my vow against my brother. Tell her that I go from this moment an outcast from my proper home to seek some employment; that I scorn to be beholden to my brother for a penny.

And do you be an ambassador in my behalf and return to Sir Ronald this purse, which, in the frenzy of the moment, I snatched from his hand. The world is wide, Miss Mackenzie ; chance may throw me again in your path ; and then as now I shall thank you warmly for your kind interest in me, and bless that mild and angel countenance, that has almost won me from my oath."

"If you were sincere in your words, Sir, you would relinquish a vow made in haste and contrary to your religion ;—I am but young, Mr. de Lancy, and perhaps, forward and impertinent ; but my mother taught me, that forgiveness of trespasses against ourselves constituted the greatest part of christian charity."

"Your mother instructed a heart of different mould from that of Lady de Lancy's. Go to that company whose cheer of happiness strike me almost to the earth. Contribute to their enjoyment, by showing that face beaming with youth, and loveliness, and happiness ; and may He who rules and disposes all hearts, keep

yours from the weight of misery and anguish, which weighs down mine! You do not despise me, I hope, nor will consider this respectful behaviour as other than the expression of my thanks."

"But once more let me beg of you to consider ;—let me,"—said the smiling girl, "join my influence, if I possess any, to that of Margaret's,—stay, Sir, with your family, and your friends."

"I am trodden upon," he replied with some vehemence, "by my family ; and for my friends," he added with a bitterness, that would have done credit to his brother's satanic mind,—“ I leave them my character to uphold ! Good bye, Miss Mackenzie—I shall be happier working for my livelihood, than in idleness, and in luxury. Wherever I go, I shall remember your kind action."

He again took her hand, and as he kissed it with respect, he raised his eyes, and saw the large tear start from her eye lid, and course down her face, as if sensible she had betrayed a feeling for de Lancy, which her modesty

forbade. She quickly withdrew her hand, and not trusting herself to speak, she hurried from the room, to join the marriage breakfast, and to deliver the last determination of Albert.

Albert watched her to the door, and listened to her retreating footsteps. The second door had closed ; he looked round the apartment for the last time, as if searching for something, which should for ever remind him of his home, and opening a drawer of a circular table, he took a diminutive old book, passed through the church, and with the small sum of five shillings, began life in reality.

In the meantime, the bride had retired to change her dress ; the breakfast was spread, and the father in-law, who had usurped the seat of Albert, sat at the head of the table, whilst the bridegroom was making some preparation for departure.

When Sir Ronald returned, and the bride came to take her farewell kiss of her father, and receive the gratulations of the company, dignified as friends, young Molesworth stepped up,

and putting a large kind of letter in Sir Ronald's hand said " I deliver up my trust to you, for there is no doubt of your marriage."

The carriage drove off, and the happy pair retired to an estate in Dorsetshire.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH an aching heart, Albert left Raven Castle, and inwardly vowed he would never return, unless as its owner. "I will come back," he said to himself, "often to mar his prospects ; I will be near him, when he least expects it ; for if Laura is there, I can gratify two of the best feelings in our nature, love and revenge."

He wandered along the high road, in mind a gentleman, but a beggar in reality. Whither he bent his steps, seemed quite immaterial ; the world was all before him ; hope cheered him on ; behind him, was all he hated, and his

heart grew lighter, as he increased his distance from his brother.

Fatigue overcame him, he had walked long and fast, and nature gave him the first hint that his mind was too active for his body. He sat himself down by a gate, and in spite of the season of the year, fell asleep, and slept soundly. At night, he found a bed for a small sum ; and there, released from the painful surveillance, to which he had been subjected, he pondered over his future prospects. His first idea was to find some situation, for which he was perfectly eligible, in any office, either under government or in some private house. He felt certain that the gentleman would be seen in the manners, more than in the coat ; and as in youth all difficulties seem easily dispelled, so Albert de Lancy saw only the brightness of futurity, and never once thought of all the miseries to be overcome, before he could mount into affluence.

The morning brought with it some few hints that no time was to be lost ; his fortune had dwindled away more than half ; and the next

morning would see him reduced to beggary. He was far from London, that best mart for talent of any description ; and he found his best means of getting there, was to embark on board of some coaster. There he had an uncle, who certainly would not allow him to starve ; and from his purse, he calculated, he should be able to remunerate the captain, who would grant him a passage.

He had now reached Newport, in Wales, a sea-port, of not very large dimensions, and washed by St. George's channel ;—with a reckless disregard to his appearance, he walked into a house, where several low characters were seated, singing and smoking ; and amongst these he seated himself. That day he had eaten scarcely enough, to sustain him through his fatigue ; and with a kind of despair, for he knew it would leave him without a penny, he ordered some supper, and at the same time, called for some porter.

Although Albert's dress, was none the better for the wear and tear of the last two days, yet amongst those with whom he now congregated,

he looked like a prince. There were three or four, of the lowest of the low; who having been gambling for their few pence, were now benefiting the winner, who, with a generosity, very common in low life, spent that for which he had risked his own money, to drown for a moment in oblivion the knowledge of absolute poverty, with which the losers were at this time cursed.

Here Albert first heard the low conversation, the utter disregard of decency, the cursing, and swearing, of those who toil through life for a small pittance, who are wanting in prudence, and neglect to save a farthing. By the side of this group, were three or four seafaring men. It was difficult for Albert, to satisfy his mind, whether these were men of wars-men, or seamen on leave from a merchant brig, which he had observed in the roadstead; but their conversation was at any rate more to the taste of Albert, than the constant drunken exclamations of the ragamuffin crew, who were now gloriously intoxicated, and who allowed the pipes to fall from their mouths, the lips of the brutes being unable to retain them.

“Avast heaving there, Tom,” said one of the group of seamen, “its all very well for you to wish to live a little ashore ; you have a wife and child, and in course you would like to give them hail for a week or so ; that’s natural enough ; but then what’s to become of the craft, if we all were to take French leave at the same time ; besides what’s the use of splicing yourself on to a woman, or grubbing through life, like those drunken devils there ; whilst with a fair wind, and a clear sky, we may run over the world, pick up money enough to last out our old age, and when the rough weather of youth is passed, we may come to an anchor and moor ship for a full due.”

“That’s all true enough ; but I want to see my wife and child ; and I tell you, I’ll meet you here again on my return.”—

“Why we have caught some twenty or thirty, and I think,” he continued giving a knowing wink towards Albert, “we may have that gentleman, in the long toggery there, who is cramming down the cold meat, as if his stomach had had many a Banian day. I wonder who the devil he is, in this house.”

“ When he’s done his allowance, we’ll try and get him to volunteer. He’s too much of a gentleman for us to pounce upon.”

“ Aye, he’s a young one,” said another, “ like a young bear, all his sorrows to come. Lets have a song, and then we’ll ask him to join us ; for he looks precious melancholy like ; and a little grog and a sailor’s song, has driven the blue devils from many a man’s mind.— Now, Tom.”

“ When the fresh breeze is blowing our ship from the land,
And Poll waves the kerchief and kisses her hand,
We forget all our love, in the duty we owe,
For our life is the King’s, boys, wherever we go !
 We forget in the strife,
 On the ocean of life,
All the petty vexations of shore going blades ;
 And our hearts only burn,
 With the hope of return,
And the wish for the dollars, to give to the maids !

“ There are many who draw from the store room of grief,
A bucket of tears, which they call a relief,
But the change of the scene, ever varying the view,
A new spring of joy, in our bosoms renew.
 And when the deck’s clear,

And the enemy's near,
We look at the flag which waves over our head ;
Then we cheerfully sing
For our country and King,
And the tear which we drop, is the tear for the dead !

“ What's the use of repining, our life's but a dream,
Yet the sunshine of hope through all sorrows may gleam ;
With the heart of true seamen we'll buffet the waves,
And free as the breeze—for no sailors are slaves !
O'er the ocean we'll roam,
For the sea is our home,
And Poll shall rejoice when we come back again ;
Then the grog shall go round,
And contentment be found,
For employment of time ever banishes pain !”

“ Aye Tom, that's all true enough,” remarked one of the men. “ I believe I'll not go to see my wife and child ; once afloat, and what with the ship's duty, and as you say, some employment to keep the devil out of our minds, who are so happy as we sailors ? I beg your pardon, Sir,” continued this man, who in the absence of his officer was the leader of the gang, “ but I hope we don't disturb you by our singing ?”

“Not in the least, Sir” said Albert; “on the contrary, your song has done me much service; for I felt very heavy of heart, and I believe that employment will make me more happy.”

“Why don’t you go to sea, Sir,” said Tom, “there you’ll hear singing, with all manners of *airs*, from the light breeze to the heavy gale; the wind always sings a bit; and as for money, if you want that, why you borrow it from the first Frenchman who crosses your hawse; and when you get it like a man, why you spend it like a man; you don’t clap it in your pocket like a miser, but you make your friends happy, as we are now.—Come, Sir, join us now in a glass; here’s the money, I’ll stand treat.”

At this moment, a rough looking man, well wrapped up in a large great coat, with a tarpaulin hat on his head, came in.

“Come lads,” he began, “its time to be moving; the boat is on shore. What have we here?”

“They are fish, Sir, for our net,” replied Tom; “they were more than we could manage at first, so I told Bill Haliday to go and black

his face, and play pitch halfpenny with them, he's a regular good one at that, and he soon won all their money ; he then gets them in here, and makes them drunk, and there they are like so many casks, ready for shipping, and Bill as drunk as any of them."

"This is a good haul indeed! Well done, Tom, you are the boy for inventions. Come, hand them off to the boat ; take them on board, and come ashore again for me, I'll wait here for you."

"Here's a gentleman, Sir," said Tom, "who is kind enough to join us in a glass of grog. He wants employment, he says;" and then, whispering to his officer, Tom added: "He looks so precious like a young lawyer, that I was afraid to take him at once ; but if you keep him at work a little, we'll do him nice enough."

"Look sharp on board, and bear a hand back again ; I want to get to sea to-night ; the wind is fair down the channel."

Albert saw the drunken men taken away, without their being able to make the slightest

resistance, and began to think that old Tom's song was not exactly true, at least that line which sounded so well when it was sung—

“ And free as the breeze, for no sailors are slaves.”

And yet, knowing so little of the world, he never suspected that he was, in all probability, to be the next man pressed into his majesty's service. His appearance had as yet protected him ; but the officer soon gleaned enough to satisfy himself he would not require much coaxing, to make him take the bounty and volunteer.

“ Aye,” said the midshipman, “ you have a long way to go, to get to London, and not much money to pay your way ; and when you get there, you will only begin some miserable life. Why don't you be a sailor ? you will soon have your pockets filled, and then you'll come back again a happy man. What do you say ? Come on board with me to-night ; and if you don't like it, why I can land you again at sunrise. It's much better than sleeping in this dirty house,”

“ I have no objection,” said Albert.

“Of course not,” said the midshipman; “why you’ll be made secretary to the captain, and instructor-general to the lieutenants. Here, landlord, what does this gentleman owe? Here’s the money. Take my arm, Sir; you seem tired. That’s all right; here’s the boat; mind how you step in. Tom, hand the gentleman aft, and take him on board, and bear a hand on shore again. Tell the cook to get the supper ready, and show the gentleman to his bed.”

The boat pushed off, and in a very few minutes she was alongside of a small sloop. Albert was handed out, not quite so respectfully as he was ushered in. The main hatch was taken off; and as he declined civilly to go down, preferring to wait on deck till the officer’s return, he was told to do as he was ordered, was shoved down, and found himself amongst the drunken beggars who had so recently been shipped.

Quite in vain was all his resistance; he was fairly entrapped; and he was quite wise enough to know that the drunken brutes by whom he

was surrounded were unable, even if they were willing, to resent the injury done to a de Lancy. Fatigued by the day's walk, he crept away into a corner; and having bitterly regretted his folly in leaving his brother's house, he resolved vengeance, allowed all his gentlemanly blood to boil over, and fell asleep.

His slumbers were not of long duration. The press-gang brought back one or two sober men, who had most gloriously fought for their liberty, but who were ultimately worsted, and forced on board. These men, having found themselves in security from which they could not escape, began to laugh at their situation, and cheered each other up by saying, "Perhaps it was all for the best, and they would show they yet retained their freedom of voice by singing songs." This they did with lusty lungs; whilst in the intervals Albert heard the seamen on deck getting the vessel under weigh. Before half an hour had elapsed, every one of the pressed men were attacked by that universal enemy, sea-sickness.

A night of greater misery Albert never passed, although, as will be seen hereafter, his life was one of strange vicissitudes. Nothing prostrates mind and body more than sea-sickness; the hero and the coward alike succumb, without either resistance or flight; and all the joys of life, be they in prospective or in the memory of the past, seem banished for a season.

About eight o'clock next morning the pressed men were brought on deck, two or three at a time. They were asked if they preferred to volunteer, but all refused, excepting Albert. He asked, if he refused, if he must be sent down to that hole again? On being answered in the affirmative, he said he would enter, and accordingly they proceeded to make a sailor of him.

The name he gave was Albert Mortimer, for the pride of family still held a place in his heart. His coat tails were docked; opposite his name on the book was placed the word volunteer;—and Mortimer, from all the luxury he might have enjoyed in Raven Castle, consented, rather than return to the brother who had ill-used him, and the sister-in-law who had de-

ceived him, to face all the perils of the sea, and all the miseries of a foremost man.

But the mind of him who has received some education does not so easily fall. He was still a gentleman; and it was merely the folly of despair which made him enter into service—little knowing the difficulty he would experience in obtaining his discharge.

For some days the Arrow (for that was the cutter's name) beat about against variable winds, during which time the sea-sickness had taken its leave, and Mortimer joined the crew of an evening, and listened with some delight to the daring exploits which these seamen had witnessed.

“I'll tell you,” said Tom, who was by far the most expert at enticing novices to enter the service, “there's nothing in the universal world half so good as a fine yard-arm to yard-arm fight. It is then the real British blood is seen; the thicker the smoke, the heavier the fire, the lighter becomes the sailor's heart. It's all true that we feel a little queer when we stand to our quarters, as we are ranging up

alongside. But only let the first shot be fired from the bow gun, and all along the main deck every man stands ready at his quarters; he does not care a straw if both his arms are turned into French telegraphs, or if his legs are shot off and his carcass given to Davy Jones! He thinks no more of his life than the mast-head man aloft thinks of the lower deck holy-stone; and when it begins, why then each man cheers his neighbour. The flag of Old England waves proudly from the peak, and in twenty minutes down comes the tri-coloured rag. I'll just tell of one action. It will make your heart jump, Mortimer; and you'll love the life you have chosen."

CHAPTER VII.

“COME sit down here, my lads,” said Tom, “while I twist you this yarn ;—before eight and forty hours are over our heads, some of the new ones below will be watched and quartered, and may be have experienced the like of what I am going to relate. I tell you, lads, whenever it shall come to pass, that old sailors give up Saturday nights, and sing no more songs, or spin no more yarns, then we shall lose our superiority on the seas,—and some other nation will hoist another broom at the mast heads of its ships, as the Dutchmen did before we walked off with it ; and we shall be swept up as clean as the quarter deck at seven bells ; but we shall never live to see that day, so I won’t get melancholy by thinking of it.

“ Well, lads, its sometime back ; for it was in 1799 that I belonged to a frigate, on the East Indian station, called the *Sibylle*,—she had been built in France, and was no doubt intended to do much mischief to our trade, but she happened in 1794 to get too near to the old Romney, and they did not part company as enemies.—Bless your hearts, the *Sibylle* became an English frigate, before the crew had time to rig themselves out in their best toggery, in order to answer to their names, on board of their new ship. Well, there she was, a prize, brought into the service with her proper name, for they did not rechristen her ; when they changed the god-father, Edward Cooke commanded her, and we went to the East Indies, where, at that time, a Frenchman of the name of Saucy or Sercy, as they mis-spelt it, had the imprudence to be sailing about those seas, with an admiral’s flag flying,—aye and many’s the Indiaman he walked off with ; but somehow or other, we never could find how.

“ Well, amongst the French squadron, was a ship called “ a *Forte*,” she measured 1400 tons,

mounted fifty two guns in all, as complement to her battery. This ship was always at some nonsense or another, she was here, there, and every where, and her captain was as well named as his ship, they called him Captain Bowl-along (Beaulieu C. Long) and, sure enough, he got that battery of his under weight and bowled along gallantly.

“This ship was big enough to have stowed the Sibylle away upon her booms, we were only 1091 tons, though we mounted 48 guns, and had only 297 men and boys, and when an officer of the Forte who commanded a cartel, came on board of us, and heard we were going out to look after his ship, he hummed a song, as we shewed him round the ship. He said something about “*mangy and ale,*” to which our purser steward, who knew about as much of French as a Spanish tortoise does of the Spanish language, said was, *mangé sans ail*, or that he would eat us without garlick. Well, says Cooke, never mind, I’m just the cook that can dress the onion any way I like, and I’ll warm it, in a precious stew.

“ Out we went to sea from Madras roads, on the 19th of February, every man and boy on board of us, being as well convinced that we should muster short of a messmate, before we returned back again to shew our colours to Fort St. George, as that we were steering for the sand heads, at the mouth of the Bengal River. There we expected to find this floating Forte; for she had made sad havoc amongst the Indiamen, and generally kept somewhere in their track,—aye, every Saturday night we got together forward, at least some of us old ones, and we sung the youngsters a song, and told them what they might expect, which was some hard blows, but a certain prize, a lopped off fin and Greenwich hospital. Then the young ones used to crowd around us, and every blessed one of them cocked up their ears like the mate of the deck, when its ‘grog ahoy.’—I tell you, lads, these yarns keep up the pluck of the navy; what is it but the history of the service told by an eye-witness? But to be sure eye-witnesses do sometimes tell precious long stories.

“ On the evening of the 28th of February—it’s not very likely I should forget that day of the month—the wind was light from the S. S. W. and the night precious dark ; we were on the starboard tack, standing under easy sail, close hauled, looking up of course S. E. when the lookout man on the weather quarter reported some flashes, which although they looked like lightning, were somehow too short for that, and he thought it was just as well for him to report it, as to get his back scratched on Thursday, for keeping a bad look out.

“ The flashes bore about N. W. and the officer of the watch remarked, they always came exactly from the same point, and were always of the same kind ; well, before he reports this to the captain, for it was only half past eight, and the mate of the watch was mustering us by the binnacle light, he asks the first lieutenant, Mr. Lucius Hardyman, what he thinks of it, and says Hardyman, I think we might as well go and see if its lightning or not ; so down goes the officer of the watch, and mentions it to the captain,—he comes up with a night glass as thick

round, as the mizen topmast, and as short as its fid, and he looks round and round, every thing being upside down, but he sees no mast head tumbling up to the skies; but still the flashes go on, until nine o'clock when all of a sudden they stop.

“ ‘ The lightning is come to an anchor,’ said the look out man, just loud enough to be over heard, ‘ I’m blessed if they weren’t all guns.’

“ ‘ Tack ship, Mr. Hardyman, with the hands ; put out every light; stow the hammock, and beat to quarters,—round came the saucy Sibylle on the larboard tack, and we edged away about W. N. W. when at 9. 30 we saw three large ships bearing S. E.

“ That’s Captain Bowl-along, said some of us, first of all, he is bearing N. W. and then in half an hour, or an hour, he bears S. E. but we are after you, my hearty, we’ll see what you’re made of, and so we made a little more sail, passed about two miles to leeward of them, then stood on till we could weather them, then round about again on the starboard tack,—in top gallant sails,—up courses, and hurrah for

the centre ship, which was on our lee-bow, and shewed a light from her stern, and which we were pretty certain from her size, was the Frenchman after all.

“ Well, the breeze was light, the water smooth, the enemy not at all disposed to run away, the fight certain, and the *Sibylle* under her topsails jib and spanker, going two knots and a half, was creeping up to begin the action, the three ships being on the same tack as ourselves, but hove to.—At twelve o’clock, when we ought to have relieved the watch, and half of the ship’s company gone to bed, we were employed in securing the yards, and getting ready for an action, which was pretty sure to be very severe, and at this time the *Forte* made no secret of her intentions ; for she shewed a double tier of lights from her ports, and there she lay at quarters, and ready to receive us.

“ It was then, my lads, that had the *Sibylle*’ crew been disposed to shew them the white feather, why they might have done it, and not been much to blame ; there before her lay three large ships, one known to be a superior force,

and the other two looked nearly as large,—who they were, or what they were, nobody knew and very few cared.

“ Shortly after midnight, the Forte filled and tacked, being close upon our larboard bow, and as her guns began to bear, she did us the favour, without asking who we were, to blaze away upon us.—This is mighty civil, said the boatswain, for I was at one of the forecastle guns and heard him; but we’ll return the compliment before long.—Well, there was every captain of a gun blowing away at the match, and puffing out his cheeks, as if he thought he could blow hard enough to freshen the breeze aloft; but the captain thought, the closer we got, the sooner it might be over, called out, ‘ No firing until I give the word.’

“ ‘ Fore-castle there.’

“ ‘ Sir,’ said the officer at the quarters, there was not a word spoken, and the Frenchmen must have thought we were taking it coolly.

“ ‘ Man the fore-top-masts tay-sail, halyards, and splice the jib halyards,’ they were shot away, and down came the jib,—the Frenchman

had now passed our lee beam, when up went the helm, and we passed close under her stern, so close indeed, that we barely cleared his spanker boom end, and we gave her such a salute in the stern, that the carpenter would have been employed for a week, in clapping in new cabin windows.

“ In the meantime, one of the other ships took shot at us, but nobody cared about her. No sooner had we raked the Forte, than we came short round on the larboard tack, ran up upon her starboard broadside, and we gave them such another turn of round and grape, that some of the crew began to talk about garlick. It was now about half past twelve, and we got at it fairly, broadside to broadside, and never for one hour, were we a quarter of a mile apart, hammering away as hard as we could, blazing away from every gun, cheering like tars, and getting the best of it, for the Frenchman fired too high,—one shot came too low, for it mortally wounded our captain, who was carried below to linger and die,—whilst Mr. Hardyman

took the command, and gave us a cheer to rally us.

“ About half past two, the Frenchman began to think they had caught a Tartar, and after one or two more rather badly directed broadside, she ceased firing ;—upon this we stopped, for who would fire upon a beaten enemy ? At this time we were close alongside, the weather was nearly calm, and we heard the Frenchmen jabbering away like a parcel of monkeys caught in a cocoa-nut tree ; but when Hardyman called out silence, fore and aft, you might have heard a pin drop, on board of us.

“ ‘ Frigate ahoy,’ said he, giving her a hail, which might have been heard at the sand-heads, —but there was no answer,—all hands on board the Frenchman were thinking of themselves more than their ships.

“ ‘ Oh,’ said Hardyman, ‘ if they can’t hear my voice, perhaps they can hear another broadside, so at it again my lads ;’ and at it again we went,—all hands were certain that a little more advice in the shape of shot, would bring them to their senses, and we blazed away more

furiously than at first. They never returned the fire, so we hailed again.

“ ‘Avast firing, and silence on the main deck,’ Hardyman tried it again, and this time he had a speaking trumpet, but still there was no answer, although we heard their chattering louder than before, and all of a sudden, up they jumped aloft to make sail, and see what they could do for themselves, in the way of escape.

“ ‘Loose top gallant sails, let run the fore clew garnets, sail trimmers make sail, fire again on the main-deck,’ said the noble fellow, who was as cool as an ice island—‘I have got you snug enough, and it’s my fault, if you get away.’

“ On board the Frenchman they were all in confusion,—and on board the Sibylle—we were all steady, we had sail made upon us before the Forte could loose her canvas—we saved the mizen top men some trouble, for down came the mizen mast, and before all the seamen had come down from aloft, away went the fore and mainmast and the bowsprit, and there a wreck on the water was the frigate, which had before skimmed it—the terror of the trade. They

heard our three cheers, for who could help it—it was not the cheer of a bully, who had beaten a weaker man, but it was a general feeling of satisfaction that the business was done, and was meant not to insult them, but to convey our joy one to another—her colours came down—the Forte was our prize.

“ Hardyman—who was a thorough seaman, as well as a gallant officer—instantly anchored, and whilst Mr. Manyer, the third lieutenant was getting a boat’s crew ready to board the Forte the order was given to clear the deck—to repair the rigging, and get up new sails for bending, for the other two ships, prizes to the Forte, might yet give a little trouble, and we had plenty before us; the running, rigging, and sails were shot to pieces, all the mast and yards were badly wounded, and up aloft we were severely mauled; but so badly did these men, who were to eat us without garlick, fire, that we had only six round shots in our hull, and although we had been hammering close alongside of this large frigate for two hours and a half,

yet we had only five men killed, and fifteen wounded. I just mention this, do you see, Mortimer, that you, as a greenhorn, may know that it does not follow, because two ships are alongside of each other hammering away for a couple of hours, that a man must be either killed or wounded ; and there is no necessity to imitate the Irishman, who having seen a shot come though the bulwark, run and clapped his head in the hole, thinking, that although the fire was so heavy, two shots could never come through the same place. We managed a little better, for after the capture we counted three hundred round shot holes in the hull, and in spite of the Frenchmen having lined their sides with cork, to prevent the splinters, we managed to kill sixty five of the *mangé sans ail* gentlemen, and to wound eighty out of three hundred and seventy, which she had on board when she fired her first shot.

“ Well, when Mr. Manyer got on board, he saw a sight enough to make a porcupine put its quills down, the dead and the wounded were lying about the decks,—the former almost cut

to pieces, the latter moaning and groaning for assistance, whilst their shipmates were down below stowing away all the money they could find in their pockets, and clapping two suits of rigging over their masts heads, as they thought they were bound for a cruize on a foreign station, where they would find no dock yard to replace the expended stores.--The Frenchman had lost his three lower masts—they fell with all sail upon them ;—the bowsprit was lopped off close to the figure head ; and never since the time that Admiral Noah went to sea in the ark, was there ever a ship afloat more like his own, for he had neither mast nor sail to work off the lee shore, where the land was good enough to heave in sight. On the topsides of the Frenchman you might have counted about a thousand musket ball holes, which a party of the Scotch brigade we had on board, managed to bestow upon the enemy. These brave fellows got blazing away from our quarter deck, and going through the load and fire, as coolly as if they had been on the top of the High-

lands, in their natural trousers on a frosty day.

“Is it not better, my new lads, to serve your king and your country—than to play pitch halfpenny with that old fox there? And as for you, Mortimer, who seem as if you were half a sailor already, and had left your love behind you, I think you will be a man not afraid to look the devil in the face, and one who will spin a yarn, as long as the main top bowling, when you get a three cornered scraper over your figure head, and trudge about Greenwich in knee breeches and blue stockings. Your love-making is over now for a time:—you have chosen the service for your future life;—and this I tell you, as an old bird now placed to catch the young ones, that if a man does his duty like a man, he will find his life pleasant enough, if he is first on deck, and last below at furling sail—always at muster—never shutting an eye when on look out,—none of your short hair and long teeth—not too fond of grog—or his hammock, but able to do his

duty aloft, and sing a song on the forecastle —his captain won't overlook him—the first lieutenant won't report him, and his country won't forget him."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Arrow, before she arrived at Portsmouth, was boarded by the Doris, an English frigate, which, being in want of men, helped herself to those on board the Arrow, who had been impressed; and thus Albert Mortimer, began a foremast man, having the advice mentioned in the preceding chapter, pretty well fixed upon his mind;—he, however, did not exactly relish his first reception.

“Come up here,” said a midshipman, who was standing over the side, “jump up, you pressed men—take a line along the deck; take off your hat, you Jemmy Jessamy chap! (this was Albert) why, you look as lightly rigged as a barber’s clerk on a Saturday night!—don’t

“Come here, my lad,” said Harrison, who was a kind hearted fellow, “here’s your walk up and down this—never let go one hand, until you have shifted the other—keep your eyes down at first on the rattlines, and before we pipe to grog, you will be able to go aloft.”

It is the first lesson in life, which is most difficult to learn. The infant’s first totter on its legs, the prelude to a walk, is often interrupted by a fall ; the first effort of the swimmer is often the sure accompaniment of a mouthful of unsolicited water ; and the first step upon the rigging of a ship, is not effected without danger, or without dismay. But when confidence is gained, the difficulty is overcome, and the seaman, in spite of the roughness of the sea or the rolls of the ship, walks without fear up the rigging, as perfectly secure as if on the quarter deck.

Albert heard the titters of some, as, with cautious grasp, he held the rattlines ; and as he got further from the deck, his clutch became firmer and firmer. But Albert was no coward ; having got to the puttock shrouds, and down

again without an accident, he recommenced his career aloft, and very shortly found, if all his tasks were as easily overcome, he should shortly be able to follow the advice given him by the man who had entered him afloat.

His endeavours were not overlooked by the first lieutenant, who, having watched him, as he took his accustomed turns on the quarter deck, called to him to come down—sent for the purser's steward to fit him out as a sailor, and as Harrison had foretold, the grog had not been piped before he had been aloft, and got over the first lesson. But when left to his own reflections, bitterly did he regret the step he had taken; it had been done on the spur of the moment; and Mortimer had sense enough to know he had humbled his mind as much as his body, by consenting to herd with those so much below him.

Amongst those who had been brought from the Arrow, he stood foremost; there was none of that dogged determination to resist every command, which was seen in the others; but knowing that he was alone to blame for the

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choice he had made, he cheerfully acquiesced in all demands, and was resolved, at least for the present, to do his duty in that station of life, into which he had been pleased to place himself.

Before he had been long on board the *Doris*, he had become a great favourite. The superiority of his manner; his being able to read and write—accomplishments not very general in the navy in 1801—gave him great advantage. He, in time, wrote the letters of all his mess-mates, and read them the answers; by which means he became well aware of their secret histories; and from being useful in the first instance, he became a kind of superior being to whom they all looked up. But this was not the life likely to be pleasant to one who could not bear the yoke even of a brother. Neither could he, as a seaman, follow up his inquiries relative to Herbert, or discover the secret he most wished to fathom. He was now fairly in his brother's net. He found, from his mess-mates, that greater difficulties existed in obtaining his discharge than he imagined: he was

told he might *see* the shore, but never walk on it; in short, that under the delusion of the song that seamen were free, he was in reality, a slave in a prison, obliged to work, and unable to escape.

Mortimer soon began to grow into a seaman; he took to it kindly; did his duty steadily; and was more than once at the yard-arm in a heavy squall. He had learned to pull an oar, and belonged to one of the cutters; and although apparently a contented man, was in reality the contrary, and watching every opportunity to desert.

In the summer of 1801 the *Doris* joined company with the *Beaulieu* and *Uranie*, two frigates of near her size, and took up her station off the point of St. Mathieu, to watch the French and Spanish fleet in Brest Harbour. Days and nights were past in the same monotonous employment; the enemy's fleet seemed little disposed to go to sea—and the English squadron as little disposed to lose sight of them.

In a squadron of this kind, of course there existed no small emulation ; the different manœuvres were smartly executed, and amongst those men who did their duty best, Mortimer was one.

In July, a corvette was discovered at anchor under the batteries, in Camaret Bay. She was believed to be in a secure roadstead—rode to her anchors with top gallant yards across—showed her large ensign from her peak, and seemed lulled into the belief that no attempt could be made by the English squadron likely to disturb her.

To see her, was to covet her ; and seamen are not frightened by obstacles, which will cost a little labour to remove. It was soon circulated fore and aft the decks, that the captain had resolved to cut out the French corvette, which looked so trim and ready for sea ; and soon after the report was spread, the word was passed, for those who chose to volunteer for that service, to go on deck. It needed no boatswain's mate to enforce the order ; the quarter deck

was crowded in a minute; and every man seemed to press forward, to offer his life in the cause.

Amongst the foremost was Albert: he had become a regular sailor; he took off his hat, smoothed down his hair, and requested leave to go, saying he hoped the regular boat's crew would have the preference. This however was not strictly complied with; but he was one named for the service; and having gained his own point, he left the rest to succeed the best way they could. Then came all the preparations for so desperate an undertaking; for the corvette, the English well knew, would be placed in a posture of defence, and every precaution taken to frustrate any attempt which might be made upon her.

On the 20th of July, the boats of the Doris and Beaulieu left their ships, equipped for a desperate service; and such was the ardour of the men employed, that they strove one division against the other, to near the corvette. In this effort to be first, the regularity which would better have been preserved by a little less

enthusiasm, and a little more discretion, was disturbed; the two divisions separated; and those left behind, for some reason or other, turned round, and pulled back again; whilst those who had reached the entrance of the bay, not willing to meet a certain defeat by pushing alongside without the aid of their comrades, lay upon their oars awaiting their arrival.

In this position they remained, until the first streak of daylight warned them of the necessity of returning; for to attempt the attack without the protection of darkness, was a madness none contemplated. With many a bitter curse against those who apparently had not done their utmost to reach the bay, the oars were again in motion—the boats discovered by the corvette—and any advantage derivable from a surprise, evidently lost. Much useless recrimination took place; and Mortimer, whose courage had been screwed to the sticking point, was loud in his complaint against the officer who had given the word to return, without first endeavouring to regain his lost distance, and advance to the attack.

In the meantime, the Frenchmen were not slow to profit by the discovery. The corvette, about noon of the 21st, weighed, and ran farther in, under a strong battery, and there was moored. Some soldiers were embarked, her quarters were cleared, the guns loaded, almost to the muzzles, and other precautions very gratifying to those on board the corvette, and very much the reverse to the attacking party, were taken.

The more danger, the more honour; the greater the difficulty, the greater the merit. The captain saw the corvette removed; but it did not for a second alter their determination; on the contrary, when the corvette in all pride of security, by way of laughing at her enemies, hoisted an English ensign under a French one, the crew of the Doris gave three cheers, and became the more anxious to try their strength; nor did they care one straw for the additional force, in the shape of a large gun boat, which was placed at the entrance of the bay, to give timely notice of the approach, or the turning and twisting of the rammers, as

the French artillery prepared the guns of the battery. The dark was anxiously expected, and when half past nine came, the crew were in the boats, without awaiting the usual summons.

Again under the same leader, they left their ships; and with hearts and hands ready, and willing, they approached the bay with more regularity than the preceding night. They mustered fifteen boats in all, containing two hundred and eighty officers and men,—the *Robust*, a seventy four, having added her barge and pinnace to the boats of the frigates.

On leaving the shore, a boat was discovered; and the commander of the expedition, judging it proper to secure it, went himself with five others in chase, leaving the rest to await his return, or slowly to progress towards the corvette, as they had still a distance of six miles to pull, before they arrived alongside of the enemy.

Some time elapsed, and the commanding officer did not return. The next in command, Mr. Maxwell, who was a lieutenant of the

Beaulieu, thought it just as well to get close in shore, in order to be ready for an attack, when the commanding officer should return. The force was diminished to one hundred and eighty men ; but never were there more resolute hearts, than in those boats ; and not one surpassed Albert, who, to the common brute courage inherent in most men, joined the honorable feelings of a man of high family. There was no cheering ; this was a business of silence and secrecy, to creep upon the enemy unawares, and to capture the vessel, without bloodshed, by a surprise.

As the muffled oars dipped silently in the water, and the boats as silently approached the object of attack, many and many were the eyes which were uselessly turned in the direction of the other boats, the crews of which would have so materially assisted in the enterprise ; but it was all in vain ; the night was far spent, the corvette lay at anchor not a mile from the boats, which now rested on their oars ; and in that half hour of suspense came all the reflection, or the danger—Albert was there unknown as a gentleman—the brother of the de Lancy

might be killed and thrown overboard without one word ever reaching that unnatural brother to whisper his security.

Not a word was spoken, the seamen, as they rested on their oars, listened with intense anxiety to catch the sound of an oar; but time gradually elapsed; it was past midnight; and it wanted not more than two hours and a half to day break. To delay was useless; to return foreign to the wishes of every man in the boats. The disparity of force was alarming; the determination of the men cheering.

Maxwell now called the boats close together, and gave his instructions. It was a great risk for this officer to run; but he was confident of success. He knew the character of British seamen, and began his short address in the manner most likely to animate them.

“The more danger, my lads,” said he, “the more honour!—We must go on without the other boats. Thomson, Wilkinson, and Hervey—you are smart fore topmen on board your own ship, let us see how quick you can be in loosing the corvette’s fore-top-sail—you need

not be nice in casting off the gaskett—a sharp knife and an easy conscience, is what you most require ;—now do you hear, you three fellows—don't stand talking to those Frenchmen on the forecastle, we'll make them comfortable ; your duty is on the foretop-sail yard ;—but let's see, we must pick out another."

"Allow me, Sir," said Albert, "to volunteer. I dare say I shan't be behind hand."

"Well said," replied Maxwell ; "what ship do you belong to?"

"The Doris," replied Albert.

"I shan't forget you, my lad ;—what's your name?"

"Mortimer, Sir."

"A devilish good name too ; now listen, in the Beaulieu boats, you are to board on the starboard bow.—Neville," he continued, addressing the officer, who commanded the Uranie's boats, "you, with your own ship's boats, the one from the Robust, and the remaining one of the Doris, will board on the larboard bow ; and Burke," said he, "you must make up in your boat for the loss of the other five, belonging to

your ship, which seems to have taken a long time to chase one boat ;—mind, two of your men will cut the cables—there’s no use for any long winded yarn about this business. There she is, at present a French corvette, I am in hopes before two o’clock, she will be clear of the anchorage, with an English commanding officer—get into your stations in two divisions, and stand by, directly we are discovered, to give way like British seamen, who are resolved to succeed in the enterprise.”

The boats soon backed into their stations ; and the word being given to give way, lustily, but quietly, the gallant fellows advanced to the attack.

It was a little after one o’clock, when the corvette was distinguished. The French, who expected the attack, had been equally vigilant ; every preparation had been made ; three hundred and thirty nine men were on board of her ; the guns had been loaded to the muzzles ; and the confidence that they could protect their vessel from every boat attack, was general throughout the crew and the soldiers on board

of her. They now saw the enemy advancing, and prepared to give them a warm reception.

As a matter of caution—not that any doubt existed in the mind of the commander of the corvette, as to the hostile intentions of the boats—he hailed them. It was answered by Maxwell, calling out to his brave companions—“Now then, my lads!” then dashed the oars in the water. The silence was broken by the cheers, which were heard far from the scene of action, whilst the animating words from each officer, as they said—“Give way, my jolly dogs!—hurrah for the first on board!”—was all that was requisite, to make every man feel the importance of his best endeavours; and it seemed as if all hearts had felt the appeal; for each boat’s crew, no longer tenacious about a discovery, bent their backs, and gave way with all their strength.

No sooner was this done, than the contents of a broadside came in amongst them. The grape and canister shot fell like hail around them;—and the water was dashed into the boats by the round shot which came bounding

along, duck and drake fashion. This discharge, enough to have checked the advance of any foe, was received with a loud cheer—"Now's your time, lads, to get on board before they can load again ; give way," said Maxwell, as he stood up in his boat, and the words were re-echoed by Neville and Burke, who imitating their leader, stood up and cheered their men.

In the meantime, the French soldiers opened a steady well directed fire, with musketry from the shore ; whilst the troops, who had been embarked, were not slow to imitate so good an example. Between each shot might be heard—"give way—give way,"—whilst the loud dash of the oars was heard on board the corvette.

Each boat pulled to the station allotted her ; and the crews made one simultaneous rush to board.—The French, armed at all points, presented a bristling front of boarding pikes, backed up by the small arm men, whilst those armed with tomahawks slashed away bravely to defend their ship.

Every exertion was made to overcome this resistance ; but without effect. The boats'

crews were driven back in spite of their clinging like cats to the ropes, and fighting like devils to gain the decks ; whilst the French, who saw the first attempt of their enemies checked, gave a cheer of defiance, and actually boarded the boats. Never, since man to man coped in single warfare, was more desperate bravery exhibited on both sides. The Frenchmen, who had so gallantly followed up their success, never returned to their ship ;—a struggle ensued—and the intruders were thrown overboard.

The fire arms of the English were now perfectly useless, and abandoned ; but, with their cutlasses only, they again endeavoured to board—again the Frenchmen bravely opposed them. But the assailant is ever more desperate than the assailed. Undaunted by the furious fire from shore and ship—undismayed by the forest of pikes which bristled round her bows—unappalled by the frequent death-wounds dealt with savage ferocity from the boarding pikes, the British seamen, unused to a reverse, again and again made the desperate assault, and

finally established a landing on the forecas-
tle.

“ Hurrah for the first aloft,” was heard from Mortimer, who, sweeping his cutlass to clear his way, jumped upon the rigging, dropped his cutlass on the deck, and springing aloft, was soon about to lay out on the fore-top sail yard. Here he found another precaution had been taken. All the gear was stopped up along the yard:—a second, the sharp knife remedied that advantage;—the foot rope fell; he was the first on the yard!—nay, so expeditiously was this effected, and so well did the seamen stationed to loose the sail obey their orders, that in the small space of three minutes, from the gaining the first footing on deck, the French corvette, known as the Chevrette, had her three topsails and courses cut adrift, and the sails hung down for sheeting home.

The noise of the falling sails sounded more dreadful in the ears of the French than the rattling of small arms, or the clash of the tomahawks. They felt they were prisoners; for they knew, that once removed from the batter-

ies, they had no confidence to bear up against their assailants. The first tremor of fear, which was manifested by one of the crew of the Chevrette jumping overboard, run like an electric spark through all the rest. They threw down their arms; and jumping overboard, endeavoured to reach the shore; whilst the sight of the canvas animated the English, who rushed toward the quarter deck, and notwithstanding the gallant opposition of some, who disdained to fly, succeeded in capturing it.

The French still hoped to retrieve their disgrace. From the main deck, they opened an harassing fire of musketry;—but the cables were cut—the ship under canvas—an English seaman, named Henry Wallis, was at the helm, and in spite of his wounds, he stood true to his post, and was the first to call out with a steady voice—“She goes a head now, Sir, for she answers her helm.” Then was the cheer of victory heard!—and those below, who still vainly clung to a last hope, finding that hope gone, surrendered and ceased firing.

The firing from the shore, which was now

confined to the large guns, put down the light air of wind which was favouring the prize, and she now became much harassed by the batteries—but she was a prize, and little did the crews of the different boats heed the Turkish salutes which came well directed toward them.

On the forecastle was John Brown, the boatswain of the *Beaulieu*; he had escaped by a miracle;—the boat in which he had been placed, finding how desperate the case was forward on the first of attack, dropped under the quarter, and Brown led the way to board, establishing a landing in the quarter gallery; but here all progress was impeded—the door had been barricaded up, and the boatswain kicked in vain, until finding all attempts fruitless, he clambered up to the taffrail, and got upon the quarter deck;—at this moment, he saw the landing was made good in the forecastle, and he knew that a boatswain's station was there. Sweeping his cutlass round his head, he roared out—"Make a line there, you d—d parlez-vous," and rushing forward, succeeded in gaining his station. He then took his "call out,"

and at every order, gave the regular pipe, as if he had been on board his own ship—the Beaulieu.

As the shot came fast, and Wallis was severely wounded, Maxwell called another man to come to the helm ; but the answer came from Albert, who standing close to the quarter master said, “ I can assist him, Sir.” Again a light breeze sprung up—the sails were trimmed—the Chevrette was fast drawing from the land, when the six boats, which had been absent, returned, and Maxwell relinquished the command.

Great was the satisfaction of the different captains at the result of this gallant enterprise ; warmly indeed were the seamen welcomed by their messmates ; and many were the tears shed over their fallen friends. The slaughter had been proportionate to the resistance !—eleven had been killed—and fifty seven wounded ;—whilst on board of the Chevrette eighty five had been killed, and fifty seven wounded.

When the excitement was over, the victory won, the prize secure—Albert looked at the

deck, covered with the dead, with horror and dismay ; he pondered over the immense sacrifice of human life for so trivial an object ; and as he deeply regretted those who had fallen, he overlooked the advantages of such gallant undertakings in the fear which they strike into a whole nation, and make them feel the superiority of their enemies ! but it was his first sight of the dead !—there, horribly disfigured, lay corpse upon corpse ; whilst the decks more resembled a human butchery, than a place for a christian to command. From this reverie, and from the determination which he formed to leave a service which even glory could not render palatable, he was awakened by Maxwell pointing him out to the commanding officer, as a man worthy of promotion, and requesting that Albert Mortimer might be mentioned to Captain Brisbane, as one deserving his best notice. This gratified his vanity ; but he still observed a guarded silence and respectful manner, as he inwardly cursed the hour in which he was prompted to relinquish his better prospects, to run headlong into a service, which

might have been his greatest ambition as an officer—but which was degrading to him as a common seaman.

The great, the brilliant exploit, above mentioned, found praise from every lip. It was a daring, well planned, well executed attack, and only inferior to the cutting out of the *Hermione*. Albert had embarked in stirring times ; Nelson's fame was high ; the navy was the bulwark of the nation ; every action worthy of record, found a poet ready to embrace its fame ; the song passed from ship to ship, from fore-castle, to fore-castle ; and when the thorough bred seamen talked over their fun on shore, and twisted the long yarn of strange adventures on a Saturday night,—then it was, that the song went round, in which the great deeds of our profession were recorded, and the young, and the old—the grave and the gay—caught an enthusiasm from the words, and felt anxious to try their powers against the inveterate enemy of Great Britain.

Albert's mind, although touched with sorrow, felt the inward glow of satisfaction at having

done his duty ; but his was an educated mind, and he burned to have the praise given to himself, and not shared by those who were sleeping in their hammocks ; neither did he feel the more gratified when he saw the officers promoted—justly promoted, he admitted—and he himself overlooked, because he was too young a seaman to occupy even an able seaman's rating.

The *Doris*, shortly after, took a cruize in the Bay of Biscay. Some few merchantmen were captured ; but no action occurred worthy of record. The ship, after the time had expired, or which she had been ordered to cruize, returned to Plymouth sound, in order to undergo a refit, preparatory to her sailing for the West India station.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR Ronald de Lancy returned to Raven Castle, after an absence of a month. His marriage as yet, had not been unhappy : he saw, with a certain degree of satisfaction, that his wife had cast aside all little marks of the attorney's daughter, and strutted about in the gaudy plumage she had assumed, as if such feathers had been her natural clothing ;—neither had she shown any particular burst of temper—the worst presage of matrimonial inquietude. If, on the one hand, she had given no cause of offence, she had not, on the other, manifested any ardent love ; she seemed to consider herself as one so highly situated, that any approach to conspicuous affection, would be beneath her. It was all very well for paupers to be in love ;

but in her lofty situation, a preference was only required; the familiarity of lovers was in no way consonant to her pride. She was the partner of him, who possessed Raven Castle; and such ladies should not feel what human nature has too bountifully bestowed on all.

Sir Ronald regarded her with great suspicion; he had been forced into the match to save his title and his money; and although the original will had been given to him, and he had destroyed it, he still felt that he was within the grasp of Rawlinson, from which he could not extricate himself. He had never manifested any light disposition to cheer a solitary hour; he never much relished conversation;—he was naturally taciturn;—habitually a bookworm;—and the honey-moon, which some lovers spend in a manner most likely to weary both parties into indifference, was, by this pair, spent in amusements more calculated to ensure happiness. Sir Ronald read, and was amused; Lady de Lancy worked, and was satisfied.—Sir Ronald kept his thoughts within his own heart; Margaret, accustomed to be alone, never felt the

silence as contempt; but busied herself in erecting those airy edifices, called "castles in the air," which best suited her imagination.

The return to Raven Castle would have led a stranger to believe that the parties had been married many years, and were fashionably indifferent to each other. Sir Ronald took possession of his library; and Rawlinson and Margaret seemed to have erected a kingdom in the drawing room. Rawlinson was a constant companion at dinner; he treated his son-in-law with every marked respect before his servants and with vulgar familiarity when alone. There was no step on the ladder of iniquity down which Rawlinson had not stepped; he had now consummated the last act, by making his daughter the wife of a man who, he well knew, was intentionally a murderer; and having so done, he thought it right to tell her the position in which she was placed, and to warn her that a rival to the title and fortune was alive; and, as Sir Ronald was the creature formed from his breath, so his breath could destroy him. His object in this was to share

the fortune to a certain extent ; and to withdraw the de Lancys, as much as possible, from the public.

Laura Mackenzie was, by Rawlinson, considered as a silly girl, just old enough to be a companion, and not likely to disturb the harmony of his plot, by any prying curiosity in family society. Thus affairs progressed for three months after their return ; no one seemed to inquire after, or court the new Lady de Lancy ; the Molesworths most scrupulously avoided them ; and the only inmate she had, who had just arrived, was Laura Mackenzie.

Sir Ronald was a magistrate ; but seldom or ever was he called upon to act. Around his estate was a peaceful neighbourhood, so far out of the track of travelling vagabonds, that they were not initiated into the secrets of villainy. They lived quiet and unmolested ; and scarcely had any mystery been unveiled or hidden, until the sudden disappearance of old Herbert.

The answer to all inquiries had been, that Sir Ronald had discharged Herbert ; and that he had left the place on the night of the dis-

charge ; but no one knew where he had gone. Some old cottagers, with whom Herbert had spent many evenings, had suspicions concerning their friend : they knew his heart too good to leave those he had known so long, without one adieu ;—and, as a secluded place, like the neighbourhood around Raven Castle had seldom a novelty to attract attention, or a circumstance to excite suspicion, this hasty withdrawal of one, who had been from his youth upwards their companion and friend, seemed to loosen the tongues of all the old women and the gossips—and various conjectures soon got afloat.

“ I tell you,” said one old woman, Mary Lancing, to her husband, “ Herbert never passed our door when he left the castle. I have heard him say, he knew more than he dared to tell ; and I am sure and certain, the great squire has got him shut up in one of his towers ; or he is down there,” she said, pointing to the earth, “ and some one would be afraid to touch the corpse.”

“ I’ve often a thought about it, dame,” replied her husband, “ and I can’t but think Joe Blackburn knows more of it, than the King of

England ; and, as sure as I live to see to-morrow, I'll go to Mr. Molesworth, and if there is any truth in the business, that good man will ferret it out. They seem to keep the thing quite hushed at the castle ; and it is said that still water is the deepest."

True to his intention, on the following morning, old Lancing called at the vicarage. Mr. Molesworth never denied himself to his parishioners ; he looked to heal all their animosities, and, as far as this earth, or the spot he inhabited, could be made a paradise, he had the gratification of seeing around him a peaceful and industrious population.

" Tell old Lancing to come in," he said ;—" it is the first visit I have ever had from him. Poor fellow !—he is getting fast on towards seventy ; and I suppose requires a little assistance."

Old Lancing came in, and stood about a foot from the door, bowing, and plastering the remnants of a fine head of hair over his forehead—but he did not speak a word.

" Well, Lancing," said Mr. Molesworth,

“what is the matter with you?—what has happened? come, speak out—and, as far as I can assist you, I will.”

“Thank your reverence,” began old Lancing—it is nothing that has happened to me or mine—blessings on you, Sir!—we do as well as we could wish; and I want no assistance whatever.”

“Well then, Lancing, what is the object of your visit?”

“Old Herbert,”—replied the countryman.

“What of him?—I know he has been discharged;—do you wish me to speak to Sir Ronald to reinstate him?”

“From the day that he was discharged, as you say, your reverence, no man in or out of the castle has seen him. He never came to visit any one of us—we, with whom he had lived as a brother, and to whose children he had been as a father;—we know he could not have passed the house, without calling to say he was going for ever—and we think”—

“What do you think?” interrupted Mr. Molesworth.

“Why, Sir, I axes your pardon, for being so bold as to think before your reverence, but my wife and myself, two poor old bodies, bred and born on the estate, think that”—

“Well, go on, my good fellow, it is impossible I can know what you think, without you tell me.”

“That old Herbert is *there*,” said Lancing, pointing to the ground—“and that no clergyman read the service over him.”

Mr. Molesworth started from his chair, and advancing near to Lancing, who stood firm like an honest old Englishman conscious of no wrong, he said in a low voice—“Do you believe him dead?”

“Aye,” said Lancing, nodding his head—“and the Lord have mercy on him!”—

“Amen,”—ejaculated Mr. Molesworth, apparently unconscious of what he uttered; then recollecting himself, he continued—“Come away from the door, Lancing—come near to me—now tell me, have you ever inquired for him?”

“Often—often, your reverence—every day

we have asked—but the answer we get, and which we think is true, *is*—that he is gone.”

“ It certainly is strange—very strange. Did he go before the wedding ?”

“ Yes, your reverence: for Master Albert inquired of us all, if we knew where he lived, or where he was born—if we had ever heard him speak of friends otherwise than of those around him; and this was before Sir Ronald married.”

“ But what suspicion have you, that he came by his death unfairly—even if he should be dead ?”

“ None much, your reverence—excepting that Joe Blackburn was seen with a pocket handkerchief covered with blood, which my wife will swear belonged to Herbert, and when he was asked about it, he turned colour like, and said he bought it—and though I know its wrong to say a word against any one, yet as sure as the rain fell this morning—Joe’s the worst man in the parish.”

“ Well—well, Lancing, I will consider what

is best to be done. In the meantime, you can inquire of the servants at the castle, who saw him last—and if he removed his clothes—and I will do what is right to fathom this mystery.”

“We are poor people, your reverence, and we hope, honest people;—if by and bye, it should be found out that poor Herbert came by his death unfairly—we should be suspected. God knows I should be very loth to say, Joe did it! for after all, Herbert may be alive;—but its our duty to our neighbour, Sir, as you teach us, to let the guilt fall on the guilty.”

“Good bye, Lancing,” said Mr. Molesworth stopping his volubility; “leave it to me—I will call to-morrow upon Sir Ronald, and I dare say we shall find Herbert alive—and well, in some other country.”

The morrow came; and the unexpected, the unwelcome tidings reached Sir Ronald, that Mr. Molesworth requested to see him. The guilty ever feel, with painful emotion, the scrutiny of the virtuous; and the very summons seemed to beat against his heart as much as to say “I will lay you bare.”

Sir Ronald received Mr. Molesworth in the

library, and with the easy grace of one doing or about to do a good action, the upright pillar of the church entered the room. He appeared to disregard the cold manner in which Sir Ronald received his proffered hand; and with the air of a man accustomed to the world's deceitful ways, he sat down on the chair to which Sir Ronald, without saying a word, pointed.

“ My business, which has caused this intrusion, Sir Ronald,” said he, “ relates to yourself in your magisterial capacity. He who is the representative of the law is, of course, always accessible. I mention this, to account for my visit, which, otherwise, as I am aware my presence is not requested, might seem a presumption.”

“ Pardon me,” interrupted Sir Ronald, his deep voice and slow articulation giving the full value to every word. “ Men of your profession are privileged; in every house the door should be opened, and the presence of the clergyman, a welcome; and much I regret that Mr. Molesworth has denied me the pleasure

of his company as a friend—to which I am now indebted as a duty. I trust your family are well?”

There was a faltering in the last few words, which would have given a stranger a doubt as to the sincerity of the questioner—or, to those who deal much with the wary, would have been known as a subterfuge to avoid the business on which he was about to act. Mr. Molesworth made a suitable reply; and after a few such remarks as are generally made to pave the way, and which show how uneasy both may feel in each other's society, Mr. Molesworth, having prefaced his speech by acknowledging the delicacy of the subject as it referred to Sir Ronald's establishment, came direct to the point, and asked if Sir Ronald had heard any tidings of Herbert since his discharge, as some suspicion existed, in the parish, against a man named Blackburn, of indifferent character, and who was suspected of having murdered him?

It is true, that Rawlinson had said, that Herbert was in Cornwall, but Sir Ronald

never credited it; it was next to an impossibility that the old man could have escaped; and all the guilt of the transaction beat loudly against his heart. Still, so well had he schooled himself, that no flush of fear flew across his countenance—neither did his lips blanch with apprehension. With his usual distinctness of pronounciation, he said that Herbert was alive and in Cornwall, and that he wondered a man of Mr. Molesworth's sagacity should listen to the tittle-tattle of old women, who, because they had met with a little ingratitude, so common to us all, imagined that their friend must have been murdered.

“Your remark,” said Mr. Molesworth, “to a certain extent, is true; but rumour, once afloat, is not easily stilled. The old people declare he never passed their cottage. There is this handkerchief of Herbert's yet unaccounted for; and your own servants declare that all his clothes remain, at this moment, untouched in his room. You must admit that it has a suspicious appearance, that an old man who was known not to be rich, should

neglect to return for his clothes; that not one of his fellow-servants should ever have heard of him; that his wife's family should be in ignorance of his existence. This all tended to excite suspicion, and, suspicion when excited, is not easily satisfied. I think, Sir Ronald—I speak it with great deference to your better judgment—that if Blackburn was apprehended and made to give some account of this property—for he might have waylaid him after he had left the castle—that the inquiry would satisfy the tenantry, and no harm could come from the public avowal, made by yourself, that you knew of his existence.”

“My time, Mr. Molesworth, is much occupied; but if the inquiry will give you any satisfaction, I cannot object.” Sir Ronald rang the bell, and desired one of his servants, who acted occasionally as constable, to bring Blackburn before him. Mr. Molesworth begged he might not interrupt Sir Ronald, whose kindness, perhaps, would permit him in the interval to amuse himself by rummaging

the library, known to contain some old and valuable books. Sir Ronald nodded assent.

Far different were the thoughts and feelings of those two men. Sir Ronald was resolving in his mind to fix the murder, if Herbert was dead, upon Blackburn. He was fortifying himself to meet every remark with a calm unmoved countenance—to appear open and manly—to court investigation—and to impress upon the mind of his reverend visitor, that no one regarded the suspected loss of his old servant more than himself. At this time Rawlinson was absent in London; and consequently, Sir Ronald was unable to get the information confirmed, which he discredited, as to the existence of old Herbert. To Sir Ronald, the confirmation of the death would have been most pleasant intelligence, but he felt the impossibility of such evidence being produced; and this rendered his schooling himself less difficult.

Mr. Molesworth, unwilling to pry even into the studies of Sir Ronald, took down the first

book which met his eye, and seating himself by the table, read some pages of the history of France, and continued at this avocation until the arrival of the servant, who acted as constable, with the much belied Joe Blackburn.

If anything could have strengthened suspicion against the miserable object now placed in jeopardy, it was his villainous look. His eyes were small and far apart, giving to a bad countenance a cunning appearance; his forehead was low, the top of the head flat, and the hinder part large; the organ of destructiveness was highly developed, and modern craniologists would have pronounced him a villain without examining any case of which he was suspected. Joe was a tall man, exceedingly well put together, and one which a prudent man would have avoided on a dark night in a narrow lane. Joe put on an air of childish innocence. He flattened the hair down over his flat forehead; and then twisting his hat about, and looking at the band and playing with the ribbon, he got his feet into

a comfortable position to support his weight, and looking up at Sir Ronald, gave so searching a glance, that even the magistrate felt a sensation which tingled all over him.

“ Blackburn,” commenced Sir Ronald, “ suspicion has been excited against you;—it appears you are possessed of a handkerchief, known to belong—or to have belonged—to my old trusty servant, Herbert, who has disappeared from amongst us in a most mysterious manner. It is true, I discharged him from my service, and that would account for his having left the castle; but you know,” continued the magistrate, “ as well as I know, that since his discharge, he has never been seen. What do you know about this business?”

“ I know no more of the matter, Sir Ronald, your worship, than you do. Perhaps,” he continued, as his cunning eyes met those of the Baronet, “ not quite so much.”

A slight flush gave to the sickly countenance of Sir Ronald an appearance of mo-

mentary health—it was dissipated in a moment, and he continued :

“ Blackburn, you know that I have never entertained any suspicion against any man in the parish. Neither do I suspect you. But it is requisite that you should give an account of that handkerchief, which I believe you yourself have admitted to have been the property of Herbert.”

“ I have no objection, Sir Ronald, not in the least, to tell you and Mr. Molesworth how I came by the handkerchief. It was a few days, or rather nights, before your honour was married, that I was out late, towards the Raven Cliff, looking at a light which was on board a vessel some distance at sea——”

“ Stop—stop,” said Sir Ronald, with marked impatience, “ we don’t want to hear of your midnight walks, or suspicions of smugglers.”

“ No, your honour,” interrupted Blackburn, as his eyes twinkled with animation ; “ I did not say it was midnight ; it was not eight

o'clock—the second bell had not rung when I saw Herbert and *another* man walk towards the cliff.”

“What can this long and uninteresting story have to do with the handkerchief? How did you get the handkerchief, Sir? Confine yourself to answering that question.”

“Blackburn,” interrupted Mr. Molesworth, “I am sure neither Sir Ronald nor myself would attempt to fix a murder upon you, or to hint that you were concerned in any way in disposing of poor old Herbert. He might have betaken himself to some other county, not wishing to displease Sir Ronald by hovering about the estate after his discharge, and, for aught we know, may at this moment be alive and well; but the circumstance of your having an article of his property, and that covered with blood, requires explanation.”

“I know, your honours, I know it does; and I want to tell you how it happened that I got this pocket-handkerchief. As I was a saying—I was walking near the cliff, when I

saw two men coming towards me—one keeping very near the precipice.”

“ Who was this other man ?” interrupted Sir Ronald, looking Blackburn in the face, and fixing his eye steadily upon him—whilst a pen, which he held in his hand, was seen to tremble with a quick convulsive motion. The question was one of despair—it was that hasty interrogatory which the wounded heart suggests, and which is calculated either to destroy or relieve the questioner.

Blackburn’s cunning look was not lost upon Sir Ronald, and the answer :

“ I really, your honour, cannot say to a certainty, but he was about your size.”

“ Swear that man,” said Sir Ronald. The book was given—the oath was administered.—“ Now, answer this question,” continued Sir Ronald ; “ will you swear that you do not know who this man was ?”

There was a suspense of a moment or two—a hesitation such as men make, when they calculate chances. But after a

short pause, Joe said, "I do not know who it was."

"Did you see his countenance at all?" interrupted Mr. Molesworth, who was also a magistrate.

"No, Sir," answered Joe.

"And you swear upon your oath—remember, you call God to witness—that you do not know who this other man was?"

"I do not know him," said Joe, in a dogged manner.

There was evidently a kinder feeling, from this moment, shown by Sir Ronald to Blackburn. He turned to Mr. Molesworth, and remarked that there was an honest manner about the man—and that although circumstances were apparently against him—he had yet no doubt, but that he would entirely exculpate himself from the charge. "Now, Blackburn," he continued, "go on with your account of this business."

"As I was a saying, your worships," he began—"I saw these two men coming along towards me."

"Stop,"—said Sir Ronald—"at this time

you did not know either man to be Herbert."

"No, your honour, it was dark, and I could not distinguish either—I do not know what induced me to conceal myself—but I did lie down close to the brink of the steep part of the cliff, the two people were coming close towards me, and kept so near the edge, that I thought they must have been concerned with the smugglers—who, sometimes, as your worship knows, land their cargoes in the bay beneath. I was at this time drawn from watching the strangers by a false fire out at sea—and, when I turned round, I only saw one man, and he was a tall one, striding hastily away. Ah, thinks I, you gentlemen are concerned with these smugglers sure enough, so I'll light a fire, and see what will come of it—so I went over the cliff—and there, struggling for his life, and holding on by a small projecting rock, I saw the man I had missed, and was in time to save the life of old Herbert."

Sir Ronald started, but instantly recovered himself.

Blackburn continued—"I then lifted him

on the cliff, and, taking his handkerchief, I wiped the blood from his forehead, for he was rather hardly hit; and, as he required some little time to recover I lit the fire, and waited there for some moments. When old Herbert was able to speak, I questioned him about this fall; but the poor old fellow wouldn't say a word about who the man was, who got him to the edge and then pushed him over. After I had lighted the fire, I came back to see how the old fellow got on; but he was gone, and I had his handkerchief—and that's the way I got it,—and I'll swear my bible oath of it any day. So you see, Sir Ronald, there's another who knows more about it than I do—and who did not wait to lend a hand to unload the smugglers."

"This is," said Mr. Molesworth, "a very unaccountable and a very discreditable history of yourself. First, we have this fact, that you were out for an illegal business—you were concerned with these smugglers; and next, to light the fire, the usual signal for the coast being clear—or else how came you to find a fire

ready prepared over the cliff, so that those above it could not see it?—and where did you find the convenient light which was so ready to your hand?—I tell you, Blackburn,” continued Mr. Molesworth, with much emphasis, “that the story is not even a probable one; it is much more likely that you, and your precious associates, finding you were discovered by Herbert, disposed of him; that the handkerchief was too good to be left in the pocket of the poor fellow, and is thus, by the unerring hand of Providence, become the great evidence against yourself. I think, Sir Ronald, you must agree with me in these remarks.”

“It looks odd, certainly,” replied Sir Ronald; “but he has told a very connected story—of which we have no evidence in contradiction. I confess I feel a difficulty on this occasion—but I see no ground for the detention of this man.”

“Surely, Sir Ronald, you must see the great danger of allowing him to go at large. What can be more or stronger presumptive evidence against this man, than the circumstance of Her-

bert's never having been seen afterwards? Is it likely that an old, valuable, tried servant, so trusty a friend, as even to have been a witness to your father's marriage—would have quietly walked away, after a man had attempted his life—and not say one word about it to yourself, or have given information as to the approach of the smugglers? I cannot for a moment believe the words of this man; they are altogether improbable, almost impossible, and I think we should ill do the duty which we have sworn to do in the impartial distribution of justice, if we did not detain this man, until further evidence can be brought against him."

"Oh for the matter of that," said Blackburn, a little stung by the clear view the magistrate had taken of the affair—"if you lock me up until Christmas next, you will get no more intelligence than you have got already; but if I go at large, and hear any more, I can come and whisper it to Sir Ronald—or, if you offered a reward, perhaps some one might bring forward the tall man, for instance, who pushed him over."

“But it appears, Blackburn, that you did not see the man push the other.”

“No, I did not see it, but Herbert, although he would not disclose the name, admitted the fact;—but they say murder will out—and, when rogues quarrel, honest men get their due. I hope I shall find this all true,”—and, as he concluded this speech, he cast a hasty glance at Sir Ronald, who perfectly understood the signal.

“Well, Mr. Molesworth,” said Sir Ronald, “what is to be done in this affair?”

“Better, Sir Ronald, withdraw the prisoner for a moment.” He was accordingly withdrawn.

“I think, Sir,” began Mr Molesworth, “that we cannot with propriety release this man;—he has in no satisfactory manner accounted for the possession of the property;—on the contrary—I think he has involved himself in a lesser crime, purposely to protect himself against the greater.”

“That may be, and is very true, Mr. Molesworth,” replied Sir Ronald; “but there is no

evidence against this man—he has accounted for the possession of the property, be it true or false, and we cannot gainsay it. I think we had better discharge him—indeed, I do not see how we can do otherwise.”

“ We can remand him, until this day week ; in the meantime, I will not be inactive in any endeavours to bring to light the circumstance of this mysterious transaction. They can do no harm—as I will take care Blackburn’s family is provided for.”

“ Be it so, Mr. Molesworth ;” then, ringing the bell, Sir Ronald desired the prisoner might be brought forward. He thus addressed him : “ Blackburn, it is the opinion of Mr. Molesworth that you are in some manner implicated in the mysterious departure of Herbert ; you, at any rate, are the last person who saw him, and we find you with some of his property. For my own part, I believe that Herbert yet lives ; but that, for some reason best known to himself, he has absconded without the usual farewell on such occasions. But, as the business must be examined into, we

have resolved to remand you until this day week. Take him away."

Blackburn was removed—he never said a word—he never appeared to care the least about his confinement: but, with the resignation of a thorough villain, he walked leisurely away.

"I fear," said Sir Ronald, "as the prisoner was withdrawn, "that he is a man steeped in iniquity; but so cunning that he will not easily be discovered. However, I do not believe old Herbert to be dead; he was a singular old man, and I think very little of his absence, even although he has left his clothes behind him."

"I hope," replied Mr. Molesworth, "you may be right in your conjectures; but we only do our duty in endeavouring to bring this to light. I wish you a very good morning, Sir Ronald;" and Mr. Molesworth withdrew.

CHAPTER X.

EVERY man, of any observation, must, in the course of his lifetime, have remarked how soon, how easily, the mind of a youngster becomes depraved. It is true, conscience is a formidable barrier; but it becomes less and less vigorously defended, as the attacks become more frequent; and even the heart ceases to beat with increased velocity when a crime is committed. Thus it was with Albert; he herded with men who were reckless of all danger, who were hardened in all iniquity; the low language, which at first disgusted him, was soon familiar to his lips. The duties of religion were gradually forgotten; for in those days the service of the church was not too frequently performed on board his

Majesty's ships ; and Albert de Lancy was gradually sinking in the vortex of dissipation which whirled around him.

Now, no man was louder in the song than Mortimer ; his voice was good, his memory retentive, and, when the breeze swelled the canvass aloft, and the ship heeled over as she darted through the sea—the duty of the day being finished—Mortimer was ever the first to sing to his willing audience, either a hasty composition of his own, or some of the numerous songs which he had caught from his ship-mates.

Praise sometimes ruins a man. The great art is to praise with discretion ; too much leads to pride ; too little to discontent. The behaviour of Mortimer in the cutting out of the Chevrette, had been lauded by all ; and in a song, the elegant composition of one of the forecastle men, his name was mentioned ; and in the chorus, where it again occurred, the enthusiasm was always excessive. Then followed the remarks of his ship-mates. “ Well, it was well done—and for a youngster in his

first cruize—I shouldn't wonder if he died an admiral, after all." Another would add, "Aye, these are the boys who do credit to the ship. Mortimer ought to have been made a petty officer; for if a man can steer a ship when the shot are flying about him, he could stand and say, steady, boys! steady! in going into a harbour—or, luff, my lad! luff! at sea, as well as old Feathervane himself."

The officers of the ship were not less kindly disposed towards Albert. Courage is ever esteemed in the navy; it is the first requisite; for many great events have been achieved by courage alone, from which the prudent would have availed themselves of the better part of valour—discretion—and left unessayed.

But even this universal praise failed to reach the heart of Albert, and to render him happy. There was for ever floating before his eyes, the stately turrets of Raven Castle—the long galleries—the splendid apartments—the church, and the last scene he had witnessed therein. Neither was Laura Mackenzie absent from his mind. He had turned

from all he loved in Margaret Rawlinson, to the fair bridesmaid; and, unusual as it was, and is, in naval poetry, to mention such a name, yet Laura was frequently on his lips, even in the wildest effusion of his young brain. He wished again to visit the scenes of his youth; the fate of his old companion, Herbert, was yet unknown to him; and he was already tired of a service, in which he saw all the difficulties of advancement, and felt the numerous insults which arise from petty tyranny.

The Doris arrived in Plymouth about a fortnight after the affair with the Chevrette, and Albert had now to witness one of the most revolting sights to which the naval service was subjected.

The crews of the different ships being partly composed of men liberated from the goals, and partly from those impressed into the service, it became imprudent to allow them any recreation on shore, for desertion would have inevitably followed so rash an allowance of reasonable amusement. In order, therefore, to

keep the men from too eager a desire for the shore, unfortunate creatures, misnamed women, were admitted on board. These poor, abandoned, wretches, were as fallen in decency as in virtue; scarcely an expression fell from their lips unpolluted by blasphemy, or undefiled by indecency. Every vice which degrades the human character might here be seen; whilst, perhaps, the most reviling of all, was the most common, drunkenness. To see a woman in that state, robs the mind of half the poetry of life—it is a sight more calculated to disgust her associate, than the most abandoned levity.

The Doris soon swarmed with these vermin, and there being no retreat, Albert was obliged to share in the revelry he despised. He was forced to give the song demanded of him, and receive applause from those, whose very features and characters were to him the most disgusting.

The next day added more and more to his abhorrence of the service, in which he had so incautiously entered. He was ordered on

some trivial service in the boat to which he belonged; two marines were placed in her to prevent any one of the crew from landing; and the free-born sons of the ocean found themselves, within boat-hook's length of their native land, prisoners. He was refused permission to put his foot on shore, and he returned, more and more disheartened.

Again was he subjected to the contagion which raged on board; and which is more fatal, from being so familiar to the daring spirits which surrounded him. It seemed beneath the character of a seaman to shun the cure; hence the general propensity to drunkenness—the disposition to use tobacco in its different disgusting shapes—the language, and all the worst parts of a sailor's life; for a youth endeavoured to *appear* a sailor, and soon learnt that which he seldom could quite forget, even in maturer years, and when the same excitement had been withdrawn.

It is customary for marines to be placed as sentinels in various parts of the ship when at anchor; and their orders may generally be summed

up in a few words, "To take care not to allow any boat alongside without permission; and to be especially alert to prevent desertion." The officers of the different watches, as the ship was moored, generally left the ship in charge of the mate of the watches; these, not unfrequently, took a comfortable caulk on the deck, wrapped up in a warm great coat; the quarter-master lolled over the hammock netting, both eyes comfortably warm; and, occasionally even a sentinel on the forecastle, might be found, with his musket leaning against the bulwark—himself, dozing into forgetfulness.

The scene below, revolting as it was, drove Albert from his proper berth; and although the orders of the ship were against any man sleeping about the deck; and any one loitering about, after eleven o'clock, would have been suspected of some sinister intention, he hazarded all reproof, and at that hour crept, unperceived, up the fore hatchway.

On arrival at the break of the forecastle, he discovered the sentinel asleep, near the long

gun on the starboard side ; and, as if conscious that his motive would be suspected, he stole cautiously forward on the larboard side ; the ship was riding to the flood tide—a very light breeze scarcely ruffled the water—and not a sound was to be heard.

The idea of desertion instantly occurred to him. He was well enough aware of the penalty, if he was discovered ; he knew that his lightest punishment would be dozens of lashes on his bare back, tied up and exposed to his ship-mates ; whilst, previous to his punishment, his legs would be confined in irons, and he an object of universal observation to the rest of the crew. That idea damped his spirits more than all the danger of the undertaking ; for, never contemplating desertion, he knew not if the tide was not near its height, that the ebb might come on before he reached the shore, in which case he might be swept out to sea, and die the lingering death of the strong swimmer, who struggles against his fate, even when that fate is the most inevitable.

He turned his eyes towards the shore—it

was not further than he had swam before; but then it was a long and perilous task, in which the cry for assistance would have hastened the punishment he would have merited. He could, he knew, creep down the cable and allow himself to drift by the ship before he struck out; but the sentinel at the gangway, or the one on the quarter, might observe him—the least splash might create alarm—and alarm once excited is not easily stilled. He had but little time left for reflection; he had heard the “all’s well” of the sentinels at six bells, of the first watch; and now it could but want a few minutes of that time when all would be on the alert—and obliged to repeat the same words.

The hazard was great; but Laura Mackenzie seemed to encourage him to the effort. Disgrace the most appalling to the sensitive mind, whispered, “Prudence—and bide a better time;” whilst his own abhorrence of the scene below hinted, “The brave never shrink from danger—even if you are detected, you will be applauded for the courage which you have

manifested in the attempt; think of all you leave and all you have to gain."

In a few seconds Albert de Lancy floated by the larboard gangway of the Doris, and was well within hearing as the incautious sentinels called aloud—"all's well."

The difficulty was began, not ended; and long did the time appear before Albert dare hazard the attempt of turning round to swim. His object was to reach the shore anywhere, and to avail himself, as much as possible, of the influence of the tide; but although he struck out manfully in the direction of Catwater, yet the distance hardly seemed to decrease. He is a good swimmer who can manage to compass a mile in an hour. It was much more than that distance to the part on which he meditated landing; but he had yet four hours before daylight broke. He kept his eyes fixed upon the land, for at least a quarter of an hour; when feeling the first warning of fatigue, he turned on his back to float, when to his dismay he perceived the Doris had swang to the ebb tide, and that he was

drifting towards her. To gain the shore now, he felt was almost beyond hope ; it was hard to choose between the only alternatives left—to gain the ship, and by the cable again ascend to the forecastle—or to be carried to sea, and meet a lingering death. Fear soon exaggerated the evil. He felt himself growing nearer the ship ; and to avoid her, he used his utmost strength to pass at such a distance as to evade, perhaps, the more cautious eyes of those entrusted with the middle watch.

He passed in security—and what then were his thoughts ? The tide now hindered his return to the ship from which he had deserted. Before him was the channel, into which he was fast sweeping ! Now, indeed, the only object which could have rescued him was fast dwindling away in the distance ; and as any exertion would have been unavailing, he submitted to the fate he had courted ; and lying on his back, gradually floated out to sea.

How often does the anxious seaman wish for daylight—for night ever makes the danger greater ! Those who have striven against the

fury of the storm in darkness, whilst the loud roar of the boiling surf as it dashed against the rocky shore to leeward was heard, can well feel what Albert felt. The sensation is not akin to that which the eager discoverer of America must have experienced, when in darkness he first saw the lights on shore :—his was a hope that his best wishes—his opinions were realized ; that rewards, honors—all which make men strenuous in exertion would be showered upon him ; that his name would be handed down to the latest time, and every nation of the world would cherish it with gratitude and esteem. But what could the dawn of day, bring to console the sea-tossed deserter ? His life might be spared ; the all benevolent Providence might rescue him from the surrounding danger ; he might be restored to his parent land ; but how ? almost naked — perfectly friendless—without one farthing by which he might purchase a sufficiency to still the cravings of nature ; every creature interested in delivering him up to justice—rewards being placed upon his apprehension ! and why had

he deserted ? not from any act of tyranny on the part of his captain, or his officers ; but because he was disgusted with the people with whom he was destined to associate.

As the waves lifted him up, as they rolled by him, bitter indeed were the reflections which crowded upon his memory. So young, and yet perhaps to die—and not even to die in peace with his own brother, against whom his hand had been raised. He now reconciled himself, by forgiving that brother all the injury he had inflicted upon him ; and he even prayed for his prosperity. The figure of Laura Mackenzie now floated before him in imagination—all which young imagination could conjure up of ideal beauty—all that the fondest heart could dictate—came rushing in his mind.

“ I will not die,” he said, “ if struggles long and determined can rescue, or save me. I have been in dangers as great as the present, and been saved ; and I have no forewarning that this is my last hour. But come what may, I am prepared. Within myself, all is peace and comfort ; and saving that hope has drawn

a glowing picture of what may be my future prospects, I could die, even here—the sea my pillow and my grave, without a murmur.”

He had now floated for more than an hour, and had been carried a long—long way beyond the Doris; but as he turned to resume his swimming, he saw his old ship riding gently at anchor, not quite so far distant as even he could have wished. He now directed his course as much towards Cawsand bay as possible. He saw, in that direction, plenty of boats, all eager to gain the anchorage; but of all the world, not one eye was directed towards him; not one soul knew his danger; and not one being cared for his existence—saving, perhaps, her who was sound asleep, enjoying all the dreams which health and innocence might supply,

To reach Cawsand bay was impossible; the tide swept more to sea. To attract attention was hopeless; the best telescope would hardly have brought him within notice; and there he might have died, and been the food of sea gulls, which, even now, impatiently hovered

over him, waiting for the repast; but for the near approach of a fishing boat, which was stretching in towards him before she made her last tack to reach the bay. The boat nearly ran over him, before he hallooed; he was rescued by seamen, as gallant as himself; he unhesitatingly avowed himself a deserter; and they, as frankly, declared they would conceal him. By six o'clock he was in a cottage in Cawsand bay.

CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT four miles from Truro, there stood a small cottage sequestered in a pleasant vale. It had descended for years in the family of the Mackenzies, which, although not a Cornish name, had, by intermarriages, become almost a Cornish people. The family had originated in a wealthy inhabitant of Glasgow; who, wishing to forget for ever the land in which he had toiled for his wealth, and where his low origin was known, had retired to this spot to hoard the gold he had amassed, and to enjoy all the miser's luxury of counting that which he was too cowardly to spend.

If ever a law was required in this lawyer-ridden country, it was required then, to force

these lying wretches to contribute their fair proportion to defray the expenses of the state. The miser who hoarded thousands, was taxed almost as a pauper; and the tax-gatherer, that scarecrow in the field of industry, hardly thought it worth the ink he wasted, to tap at the door of Archy Mackenzie. He died, and his heir dissipated his money. The cottage became the property of a maiden sister, who bequeathed it to her nephew, who, again, left it to his widow; who now, with one daughter, inhabited the almost forgotten abode.

“And you have seen him lately,” began Mr Rawlinson, “have you, Mrs. Mackenzie?”

“Indeed I have,” replied the old woman; “he was in great distress; and poor as I am, I could not refuse Laura’s request to share even the little I have with so old a servant.”

“That is spoken like a good charitable Christian; and charity is a good legal release for trifling sins—it covers a multitude of them, and is doubly blessed when it comes from those who drain it from a scanty store, and

who might themselves be benefitted by the gorgeous overflowings of the rich man's purse. It does you infinite credit, Mrs. Mackenzie, and I should like to share in your pleasure, by alleviating, as far as my poor ability would warrant, the distress of this poor, old, ill-used Herbert. Where does he live?"

"He has left his abode," interrupted Laura, whose residence at Raven Castle had given her some insight into Rawlinson's character; "left it some days since," continued the girl, carelessly, "and, poor fellow, in great distress. Perhaps, if you leave that which will be most charitably disposed of, with my mother, we might be enabled to make it reach the intended channel."

Rawlinson fixed his eye on Laura; but the girl, quite unconscious of the glance, continued the meditative employment of knitting a purse.

"Everybody," continued the lawyer, "seems indisposed to remain quietly at home. That Albert de Lancy—ha! you start, Miss Laura,—pray have you seen him? he, too, has wan-

dered away from his brother's house ; and, if not sheltered by a poor-house, or fed by the King in one of the goals, must be a vagabond, by law, from his strolling propensities. The Vagrant Act is sufficiently comprehensive to include him in its merciful grasp ; for, having no home, he must necessarily sleep under a hedge or a haystack, and that is crime enough in a pauper."

" I think," replied Laura, whose face crimsoned as she spoke, " that your daughter's brother-in-law, might claim some better distinction at your hand, than a rogue and a vagabond."

" I speak, my dear," replied the artful attorney, " of the law of the land. Any misfortune might drive a man to be houseless, and then he comes under that class so well described by Churchill :—

" Beggars of every age and station
Are rogues and fools from ——— situation."

" And what drives Albert de Lancy to this

state?" asked Mrs. Mackenzie. "Surely the Baronet has wealth enough to supply the wants of his own brother?"

"Mr. Rawlinson," interrupted Laura, "is the best person in the world to whom you could apply for information, on so interesting a subject."

"He merely, I believe, assaulted and robbed his brother, Madam; that is all, I believe; and Sir Ronald was insulted when he offered forgiveness. You see, my dear Madam, that Miss Laura imagines it quite desirable that brothers should knock each other about, like bluebottle flies in a butcher's shop."

"Stop, Mr. Rawlinson; I saw Albert de Lancy return the purse. I believe he was driven, by the most aggravating of all circumstances, to strike his brother; I am sure he repented the rash act; and, in all probability, has long since served the hard apprenticeship of those, whose daily toil but ill supplies the food of life; and who, when oppressed by fatigue, lie down to rest upon a miserable pallet, with scarce covering enough to warm their aching limbs."

“ Young ladies are often misled by reports,” replied Rawlinson, “ and, in the warmth of their imagination, colour rather too highly. The poor sleep more soundly than the pampered man, whose nights are interrupted by night-mares and alarms ; no thief despoils the labourer of his profits, and midnight murderers skulk behind a hedge, as the unworthy prey passes by. But, to those in affluence, every step is that of danger ; and the window of the rich often yields to the centre-bit of the housebreaker. The night creeps on, and I must return to Truro ; to-morrow I will renew my visit, and endeavour to discover the retreat of Herbert, whose poverty I will relieve. He can return to the castle ; Sir Ronald will again receive him, and his old days may be spent in that abode, where his youth of honourable service, procured him a good and an excellent character.”

“ There is something strange in that man’s sudden appearance amongst us,” said Laura, as Rawlinson left the house. “ He has not left his daughter to become the haughty mis-

tress of the castle, uncontrolled by his advice, or his presence, without some urgent business had prompted him to make this long, and apparently useless visit."

"It is the first time he ever came here," replied Mrs. Mackenzie; "and, if my old eyes do not deceive me, never was there a man with a worse countenance. To-morrow, he returns; perhaps Herbert had better see him."

"No," replied Laura! "it were better he left his charity here, and returned without an interview. We can always dispatch the old servant to Raven Castle; if, indeed, the poor wretch would hazard his life by so doing."

"How can he hazard his life?"

"Merely," replied Laura, unhesitatingly, "on account of his age and infirmities; the distance he would have to travel might be too long for his old legs. It is late, dear mother—good night."

When Rawlinson left the cottage, he made the best of his way towards Truro. The night was dark, and a small rain began to

fall. As he walked quickly along, he thought much of the dreariness of the road, and pondered over the cunning answers of Laura Mackenzie, who had evaded all his questions concerning the actual abode of Herbert. He had come this distance to learn from Herbert's own mouth the story of the cliff—thus to hold his son-in-law tighter within his grasp, having, at all times, the witness ready to be brought forward. Rawlinson was a man not easily foiled; he was as great a villain as ever Sir Ronald could have selected to forward his envenomed and unnatural wishes; cunning in his profession, sagacity enough to discover its numerous flaws, he made his clients believe in his sincerity by his pretension to religion; which character he put on and put off, with as much dexterity as a play-actor changes his garb; taking special care, when under this disguise, never to hazard a word which could be construed into levity; whilst on the other hand, when it was requisite to appear gay with the gay client, he was lavish of his

anecdotes, in which there was no tincture of religion, no moral which redeemed the looseness of the story. As he plodded his way homewards, revolving in his mind his future conduct in regard to Herbert, he felt himself suddenly seized by his collar, and held by a hand too powerful to be loosened.

“Come, shipmate,” the stranger began, “I have no time to loose; necessity, they say, has no law, and therefore bear a hand; unrigg yourself, and clap this gear over your mast-head. Fair exchange is no robbery; I want your clothes, and I give you mine. Quick, or by all that’s holy, you’ll never live to eat your supper.”

“That voice,” said Rawlinson, as the stranger’s grip was a little relaxed, “is familiar to me.”

“Not so familiar as the hand will be, if you stand there and disobey orders;—quick—your coat and waistcoat! the lower rigging will do—you may keep that; don’t say I wanted to rob you—take everything out of your poc-

kets, and tell me where I can forward you your traps, when they have served my turn."

Rawlinson was soon released of his fashionable attire, and, in return, was dressed in a round jacket and guernsey frock, on the front of which he saw the name of "Doris."

"Now, then," said the stranger, "part company. But tell us your name before you haul your colours down."

"If you send the clothes to Mr. Rawlinson, at the Crown Inn, any time within forty-eight hours I shall receive them."

"I shan't forget the name in a hurry. There! top your boom and make sail."

Rawlinson did not require a second hint to depart; he had taken care to remove his money from his waistcoat pocket, but he had not, owing to his fears, removed the various papers in his coat pocket; he was glad enough to escape, and making the best of his way, arrived at his inn. The stranger had left him his great coat, which, being buttoned, concealed the garb beneath.

No sooner was he seated in his own apartment, and released from all fears of a second visitation, than he rang his bell, and announced that a robbery had been committed, and shewed his dress.

“The Doris,” said the landlord, as he looked at the guernsey frock; “why, there are bills stuck upon every wall in the town, mentioning the name, and giving the description of the deserter, who run from that frigate about ten days ago, with a reward of three pounds for the fellow’s apprehension; you can’t be the man, surely, and think to blind me with the robbery.”

“Nonsense,” replied the irritated attorney. “Surely, it is bad enough to be robbed of one’s coat, without being suspected a deserter and a liar. Let me have some supper.”

Boniface, although well inclined to obey the last order, was ready enough to disbelieve certain portions of the story; and, forthwith, ordering supper for the gentleman in No. 3, he ran to a dead wall, against which, the bill

stickers had been liberal of their paper. "Here it is, sure enough; 'Deserted from His Majesty's ship Doris, Albert Mortimer.'" Then followed a description. "'Five feet, nine inches in height, dark hair and eyes, rather fresh complexion, small whiskers, good figure, twenty years of age. The deserter is supposed to have worn at the time he left the ship, white-duck trowsers and a guernsey frock, on which the ship's name was marked.'" The customary reward for his apprehension followed.

"Cannot be him," said Boniface; "this chap has light hair—carrotty withal—large bushy whiskers, is not much taller than a wine pipe; and, as for his figure, it's more like the square build of a mile stone, with a butcher's tray stuck in front of it. However, he has been near the deserter, and if I give a hint to one or two of my workpeople, I think we might catch my gentleman under a hedge. Twenty years of age! why, that carrotty-headed tiger is fifty, and has as much care on his countenance, as a man with the

lock jaw. I never throw a chance away, and I'll have a look out myself this night."

Returned to the inn, Mr. Rawlinson was duly informed of the description of the deserter, which corresponded exactly with that of the person who had so unceremoniously borrowed or exchanged the coat.

Albert knew that the cottage of the Mackenzies was not far distant from the spot on which he now stood. The fishermen who rescued him, sheltered, fed, and housed him for one day—but, at night, they urged him to depart, as they were apprehensive that he might be betrayed by some of their associates, who were not influenced, perhaps, by any strict notions of honour, weighing that in the opposite scale, in which was placed three sterling pounds.

It was a service of some danger to Albert, for, in the times of which we write, it was a matter of extreme difficulty for a deserter, dressed as a sailor, to make good his escape. He left those who had saved his life, during a heavy storm: and that which would have

deterred others from venturing abroad, to him offered a kind concealment; for the first time in his life, he was fearful of meeting the eye of a human being. At a quick pace, he struck across the country, carefully avoiding any house, and keeping close to the hedges, directing his steps into Cornwall; during the day, he selected the most unfrequented path, or seized a quiet spot as a place on which he might repose.

In this manner, he continued, until the seventh day, when having seen his name published as a deserter, his dress accurately described, his features, height, appearance, all mentioned in the hand-bill, he resolved to exchange his dress with the first man he happened to meet, before he presented himself to Laura Mackenzie, from whom he hoped to learn something relative to Herbert. A countryman happening to pass, Albert was informed that the residence of Mrs. Mackenzie was within a bow shot.

It was past ten o'clock, the night dark and dreary, and the brother of the possessor of Raven Castle had no shelter from the coming

storm. He stood before the humble cottage which contained all he loved on earth. How often did he pace before the little gate—how fixed were his eyes on the only window from which a light appeared. To him, the light was as welcome as that which greets the eyes of the doubting mariner, from whom the sun had withdrawn its setting splendour, and left him uncertain if the rock-girt coast was within five, or one hundred miles—and when, dreading the impervious horrors of the leeward shore, the mist grew thicker, and the wind increased, some momentary clearance showed the welcome light, broad upon the beam, and sufficiently distant to establish the security of the vessel; oh, pleasure inexpressible—known only to those whose lives are perilled on the broad ocean, where the barrier against eternity, is a slender plank—to whom each breeze may be fatal—each sea a grave.

Albert felt a security, to which he had, for one week, been a stranger. It was true, the coat which concealed his person was larger than was requisite, and even his elegant figure ap-

peared to disadvantage enveloped in such an acre of cloth ; he paced round the front of the cottage—the light was removed, and again replaced ; it was evident some one was on the alert, and who could it be, in the imagination of a lover, but that person, the object of his affection. It was not long before the window was opened, and Laura Mackenzie, as if courting the breeze, which was fragrant from the jessamine, appeared. Albert crouched under the hedge ; for although the very object he sought, was now before his eyes, yet he was rather unwilling, or afraid to address it ; she saw him not, or the song which she carelessly warbled, would have been withheld, and the window closed ; but still she lingered—still she sang—and only paused, when the approach of footsteps warned her that delicacy was the handmaid of discretion.

A countryman apparently bent with age and enveloped in the white domino, a smock frock, came slowly along the road, his trembling hand was supported by a stout stick—a breath of wind might have been an adversary against

which he could hardly have contended ; the poor old man seemed lingering on the earth yet verging towards his grave.

“ Come quicker, quicker,” said Laura Mackenzie, whose impatience chided the slow advance of the old man—“ quicker, I say Herbert, for I have much to say, and you must be on the alert.”

“ Heavens bless the voice !” inwardly ejaculated Albert, “ that thus warns me that my oldest friend is at hand.

“ Aye Miss Laura,” answered the old man, young ladies never consider that old age stiffens the joints, and bends the back. When I was young, I could walk faster than many who now chide the decrepitude of years—and my breath which now hardly supports life, was then sufficient to keep life and soul together even if I ran up a hill ;—but here I am, Miss, quite close enough to listen to you and do your bidings.”

“ You must walk at least four miles this night, old Herbert,” replied Laura. “ I have reasons quite sufficient, why you should not be

so near the cottage for a day or two. Take this purse, your eyes can find it by this clear moonlight—there, more to your left: now you see it! go at once—any way but towards Truro; and the night after to-morrow be here about this time.”

“Heaven bless you, generous lady,” said Herbert, “you have given me enough to provide for a month’s expenses—let me give you half back.” Poverty is a tyrant, which would grasp all within its reach, and scarcely heed the generous hand, which proffered the assistance; but greater is the pleasure, even to the giver, than to the half famished wretch, who is the receiver.

“Keep it all, good Herbert, much as it may appear to be, I fear it will not keep you in the luxury of a dependant at Raven Castle.”

“Ah, good lady,” ejaculated Herbert, “would that I could return there, and not be suspected. I only wish I could see my young master Albert happy, as his mother wished and expected him to be—then these old limbs might sink into the grave, hands which often welcomed mine, might

cover this old body with the earth, and my last prayer should be for him who ever regarded me more as a companion than a menial."

"Begone, begone," said Laura, "there are footsteps approaching, and even innocence would not escape calumny, if it distributed charity from a window, when darkness made it a mystery."

The window was hastily closed, the light removed, and Herbert slowly advanced on the high road, in the opposite direction from Truro.

Albert who had overheard their conversation, felt eager to clasp again the hand of his old and valued friend ; but he was a deserter ; now the law might claim him as a thief—and all the boldness of a sailor dwindled into the crouching apprehension of the evil doer. Fortunately for him, he had conquered his anxiety, under the consolation, that a few of his rapid strides would soon overtake his friend ; for no sooner had Herbert commenced his retreat, than the voice of Boniface was heard, cheering on one or two persons in the pursuit of a thief—and deserter.

“ Come, don’t be making such a noise, you, Wilson ! keep close to the hedges, and walk fast. He cannot be far distant—ah, yonder goes a man—after him ! after him ! ”—The pursuers soon gained upon Herbert whose pace was none of the quickest, whilst Boniface continued his description of the deserter, and described the coat, which he had so uncereemoniously exchanged ;—the hope of reward, animated the pursuers—and old Herbert was shortly overtaken.

CHAPTER XII.

“HOLLOA, my friend!” said the first man as he came close up to Herbert—“Where are you going to at this time of the night?”

“Where such men as you seldom go,” said the old man, “Home—to my bed.”

“Hold up your head, and let us look at your face—why you stoop down, as if you were afraid of showing yourself.”

“Can you look me in the face like this,” said Herbert rising his head, “if so—I have mistaken my men, and you are honest people.”

“Thank you for the compliment,” said Boniface. “I hope we may say as much of you, and tell no lie. He’s too old for our man—go on, lads.”

“Go on, indeed!” said Herbert, “and take care you don’t accidentally meet with a person who, doubting your honesty, hands you over to the constable.”

“Stupid old fool,” muttered one of the men, “what babbling blockheads men become, when they fancy age is a license to talk.”

Laura heard some words which alarmed her, and she again opened the window;—each moment lessened the sound—for Herbert continued his progress, and the conversation, save when the old man held up his head, gradually became more distant.

“Be not alarmed, fair lady,” said Albert, as he rose his head clear of the edge, which had concealed him, “poor old Herbert will not be molested—those men seek a younger, and a more desperate man.”

Prudence whispered that the window should be hastily closed—curiosity suggested there was no harm in asking the stranger concerning Herbert; and there was a something stranger than either in the sound of the voice, which

overcame all the scruples she might have entertained, and rivetted her to the spot.

“ You know Herbert,” she asked, wondering how any stranger could be acquainted with the man, who had, ever since his flight from Raven Castle, lived almost concealed.

“ Long before you ever saw him, I knew him,” replied Albert.

“ Where ?” asked Laura hastily.

“ At Raven Castle,” replied Albert, “ where I first saw you, and listened to a voice, which might have persuaded any one but — hush—they come—you will see me again before long.”

Laura stood at the window, astonished—motionless. She heard the returning footsteps of the discontented pursuers, but searching in vain for the form or figure of him who had addressed her.

The light, and the fair figure, which stood at the window, attracted the notice of one of Boniface’s companions, who having taken the precaution of arming himself with a little Dutch courage imbibed with some ale—allowed his tongue an unfortunate liberty of speech—he

being accompanied by the landlord and stable boy—and the boots of the inn.

“ I say, my pretty lass,” he began, “ I wonder if you are looking out for your sweetheart—why he must be a bad un to be out a rambing after the girls at this hour—and you must be precious in love with him, to keep your head out of the window, as if you were longing to kiss him.”

To this effusion Laura made no answer, for she was quite unconscious of the insult, so unexpectedly lavished upon her, but she still remained at the window.

“ Well, my pretty lass,” continued the half inebriated speaker, “ if he does not come, I’ll supply his place—just you stay where you are, and I’ll climb up and give you a kiss.”—The proposition was cheered by the boots and the ostler, and both remained to see the fun, while Boniface, annoyed at his unsuccessful cruize, returned to Truro, to warn some of the watchmen of their chance of capturing the prize, as in all probability, he would sleep in the town.

“Bravo, Bill,” said one, “you always was a fancy man with the women, and you have fascinated that maid with your soft tongue.—Silence you know, Bill—silence, gives consent in every thing, excepting when a man asleep is asked for his watch and money, and the gentlemen as asks the question, takes them both, before the sleeping man is quite sure they are gone.”

“Well, here’s for a try, I’ll just clamber over the paling, and be up with you, my lass, in a moment. Give us a lift, Tom, will you, for my head seems to be an overbalance for my feet,”—as he said this, he placed his hands on the summit of the railing, and standing on his left leg, offered the other for the assistance of the by-standers.

It seemed to afford considerable sport to all concerned, and they looked on with that peculiar delight, which men do, when they know they are concerned in mischief. Short however, was the look of pleasure—suddenly the ostler and the boots found themselves sprawling on the road, whilst the adventurous lover was seized

by the legs, and dragged from his hold—he fell heavily upon his face, and remained stunned by the fall, whilst his two companions, whose courage had been animated alone by the hope of reward, and the presence of their master, sprang upon their feet, and ran away. Albert stood with one foot upon the neck of the sprawling man—and little heeded the cry of deserter, robber, murderer, which the two pursuers so loudly pronounced.

“ Once more, Laura Mackenzie, you behold the destitute orphan—the supplanted lover—the pilfered son—the deserted brother, Albert de Lancy,—led by the remembrance of her whose kindness partly alleviated my sufferings—whose beauty charmed me—am I come here—and fortune follows where resolution leads. The man I most wish to see I find a pensioner on your liberality—but short is the time allowed me even to speak with him, who alone can unfold the mystery in which I am enveloped. I am now hunted as a deserter from my ship—as a thief, for I have taken the coat from another, and now as the highway

robber, who has assaulted the housebreaker. Get hence!" he said to the man who now began to struggle. "Go home, and tell your miserable cowardly companions that it was Albert Mortimer, the deserter, who drove them away and who revenged the insult you offered to that fair lady."

The hint was soon taken and Laura was alone with Albert.

"Why," she began, "do you subject yourself to be thus hunted, thus disgraced? Raven Castle is your home."

"No home, fair Laura to me—never will I cross that threshold but as one come to claim his just inheritance—and had I its wealth, I would strive to deserve your admiration, as now I deserve your censure."

"Oh, speak not so! here am I happier than surrounded by all the retinue, even of Raven Castle. You say you are destitute; wait, but one moment, and I will relieve you."

"Stop, fair Laura, and hear me. Within half an hour this road will be thronged with men who would hang their own brothers for

the paltry reward offered for my apprehension. Here I cannot remain—to serve me, let me see Herbert, or if that should be denied by the closeness of my pursuers—do you glean from him every word he recollects my father to have said concerning me—place it in writing and treasure it up, as an heir-loom; and if one so degraded in your eyes could but demand a further favour, it is this, cultivate with your utmost care, the friendship now subsisting between yourself and Lady de Lancy. Through you lies my only hope. I live but to redeem my character, in your estimation; for when all around looked black upon me, your countenance gave me hope of future happiness. How came I to this cottage now? but for the hope of seeing you;—and why linger I here now, when every moment is fraught with danger? but to be near you—to see you—to hear you—and thus after days of danger—and nights of strife—and an existence of loneliness, once more restore myself to all my heart holds dear.”

“ I must not hear this,” replied Laura; “ but

this I promise—all that you desire, I will most cheerfully do.”

“Then do this quickly,” answered Albert, “remember me—let not my absence obliterate me from your memory—and as I am constant in my affection, so may I be rewarded.—Hush, I thought I heard a distant voice.—No, it was but the fear of my coward heart which prompted the apprehension. The very night wind, which creeps through the almost motionless leaves, sounds heavily upon my ear; and the cheerful cricket, whose constant noise might inure one to its sound, brings with it some alarm. Remember me, fair Laura! for, as I floated, like a cast weed upon the ocean, and life itself fast ebbing away, I thought of you—strove against the impending danger, and escaped.”

“Not this time, my lad,” said a man who instantly leaped from the hedge, followed by others, and who seized Albert by the collar.

“Liar!” screamed Albert. “Lie there;” the stranger was prostrated on the ground, and the deserter was freed. A cry of terror was heard—

the light was extinguished—the window closed.

At one bound, Albert cleared the hedge and betook himself to flight; the pursuers as eagerly followed and the result was doubtful; one, fearful of disgrace, the other animated by the prospect of reward—one branded for life, if captured—perhaps, condemned to death—the other eager to bring the public thief to justice; but he who speeds to save his life, has *all* to gain. The speed increased, rather than diminished, and one by one the pursuers dropped off, until one only remained, and he, although fast losing ground, continued his almost hopeless pursuit. Albert still ran, until he imagined the many were far distant and the only one who followed nearly fatigued. Then he stopped, and awaited his pursuer; the short respite restored his almost exhausted breath; young—active—resolute—he was soon prepared to meet his foe, who, much older in years, was of a build which denoted strength. Advancing to the last, with the eager impetuosity he had commenced, the pursuer rushed upon his sup-

posed prey. "I have you at last," faintly uttered the stranger.

"Indeed," coolly replied Albert; "and my destination?"

"To a goal, scoundrel; why, as I live, you stand a self-convicted thief; that coat is mine."

"It belongs to as great a scoundrel as ever drew breath," replied Albert, "one Rawlinson, an attorney—do you recognize me?"

"Albert de Lancy!" ejaculated Rawlinson.

"The same whom Mr. Rawlinson would lodge in a goal, whilst his daughter sleeps in his victim's bed. Could three pounds ten shillings have induced a thriving attorney to leave his bed to hunt up a deserter?"

"It was the wish to take the thief who stole my coat."

"Now, my wish is gratified, to meet, face to face, where none can witness but the moon, the man, by whose intrigues, and by whose stratagems I was deprived of her who loved me, and the wealth which I know was mine."

“What avails the argument now? Would my daughter marry a thief—a deserter—a——”

“A villain,” interrupted Albert, “go on, Sir; I can assist you with a few words, which, as I have often lavished them upon yourself, are ready at my tongue’s command, when the object of my hatred is before me; but now I scorn to use words—place your hand upon my shoulder—say when you are prepared, advance your foot to mine—and, as your frame is the strongest—your judgment the most matured—your blood the coolest—every advantage will be yours, but the advantage derived from insulted honour; here let us grapple as foes—and as foes, let us part for ever.”

“Sir, you brand me as a dishonest man; nay more, as a villain; before this strife commences, justify yourself in that respect, and tell me in what manner I have so conducted myself, as to merit the reproach.”

“Can I be blind; can I be accounted an idiot?” answered Albert, “to see my own desolation and not be able to trace it to its

right source? You have ever been more like a master in Raven Castle, than one whose advice is solicited and paid for. When your daughter's affections were fixed on me, who did I find thwarting my views and prospects, but her father? I saw that man, who, before my father's death, was verging upon pauperism, suddenly become rich; I saw him, who never crossed the threshold but when invited, walk in as the equal to its proprietor; and I have seen him actually command that attendance, which society has forced upon welcomed guests. In every step of my life, since my father's death, you have watched me; wherever I go, I trace you; and as I know you to be cunning, ambitious, desperate, so I confidently brand you as a villain, and challenge you, even in the slight accusation I have made against you, to plead not guilty."

"Poor young man," said Rawlinson, "how sincerely I pity you; your poverty and your desperate situation blind your reason. I will prove myself even now your friend; I will return with you to Raven Castle, place you

in your position in life, urge your brother to make you a suitable allowance, and in any path of life you may select, do my utmost to clear any difficulties."

"And for ever hold Albert de Lancy indebted to you for only giving him one quarter of his rights, when, perhaps, the whole may come unsolicited. I have a word to say before we part; I see in your subterfuge, the coward's evasion; I will not, therefore, strike you, neither will I waste more words, when time to me is precious. Beware—there is no crime so well concealed, but that detection ultimately lays it bare;—there is a punishment on earth in one's conscience—the prelude to a greater one hereafter. Beware of me—my eye is for ever upon you—the never sleeping vigilance of the injured, hovers over you; return to my brother—your victim—and tell him this, if you have more courage in words than in deeds, that if he will but disclaim you, and do me justice, I will forgive him."

Rawlinson had gained his object,—it was

to avoid any personal conflict, for although stronger than his adversary, he was deficient in that courage which is almost always attendant on innocence; he now sought to slink away with credit, and at the last to leave a good impression behind him.

“ I regret the false view you have taken of my conduct; and, could I have imagined you as the deserter, I would have led those poor fellows in a contrary direction. From the despair which prompted you to exchange your dress, you must be deficient in resources, allow me to offer you this purse, it can be repaid when you are reconciled to your brother, to which end, I will use my utmost exertion.”

“ I will borrow that,” replied Albert, “ which shall be returned with interest. I could, from the character I have taken, seize it, and be no worse in the eye of the law than now. The sooner we part, the better—before long you will see me again; if you are sincere in your promise, I shall know it. Then, even I—insulted as I have been—driven from

my home, and forced into crime, may yet pardon you. Go !”

Rawlinson turned round to retrace his steps, and Albert, quite unconscious of the road, followed the first one until nearly day-dawn, when he struck across the fields, keeping aloof from all signs of habitation.

No sooner had Rawlinson got clear of his desperate enemy, than he rubbed his hands and began to turn in his mind the benefit to arise from the discovery. “I have him,” he said, “as a deserter—that is easily traced from the ship—the description, even the manners of the man, that must be ascertained and remembered. In the next place, he has committed a felony; and I, if it becomes necessary, may burthen my conscience with a slight accession of load, by adding an affidavit of theft. The purse and its contents, I could swear to for years to come;—now am I doubly safe—but to render me secure, Herbert must be found; and Laura Mackenzie shall be the means, cunning as she fancies herself, of persuading the old fool to return to Raven Castle.

How beautiful is this night! and yet how I long for the day; even that boy alarmed me. How true it is, that it requires three times the talent to be a rogue than it does to be an honest man. The one leads to respectability, and the other to the gallows. His words have struck me hard, for there was truth lurking in every sentence; but I will revenge them—I am the brother of Ronald de Lancy—his fortune is mine; and from the web which I have woven around him, no sudden leap can break through the entanglement.”

CHAPTER XIII.

" I WONDER," said Tom Snarling, as he stood at the helm of the Spitfire, " where the devil we are bound to now? That captain of ours is grown as steady as a pump bolt, and speaks as little as a quaker in action; he cautiously avoids all strange sail; and I think our chance of prize money is about as small, as a lawyer's chance of going to heaven."

" Well, and what then, ship-mate? go where he will, all will follow him;—he is as brave as a lion, and as generous as a young girl of seventeen. What course are you steering?"

" About E.N.E.; she lies a little higher every now and then, and orders are left to steer that course if the wind becomes fair."

“ It’s cold, Tom; devilish cold, after the West Indies, and some of our mongrel crew will soon begin to squeak, if Jack Frost nips them a bit; I thought that dark Spaniard was inclined to give his tongue a little too much license yesterday, when the captain refused to board that craft we spoke.”

“ That Spaniard’s a devil in duck trowsers. I never shall forget the last game at Monte I ever played with him; I won some doubloons that night, but they only got me into mischief; I won them in a church, and a precious noise we got up. I tell you, my old ship-mate, that if a man plays cards in a church, the devil always cuts the pack, although some say he never claps his cloven foot inside the door.”

“ He’s got a pair of wings, Tom, and his body is so elastic that he can twist himself through a key hole; of course, he would not put his foot on the stones, it would give him a chilblain for life. Lord love you, Tom; he never puts his foot on anything that’s not red hot, and eats nothing

but capsicoms and red pepper, mixed in Chili vinegar. I heard all about him from a priest who came to give me a passport when I was so nearly kicking the bucket with the yellow fever."

"He must have been preciously intimate with the old gentleman," replied Tom, "and dined with him, no doubt."

"Tip us the stave, Tom, about that Spaniard and the pack of cards; a middle watch would not be worth keeping without a glass of grog and a yarn. How the little craft spins through the water; there never was one built who could creep to windward of her; and when there is just wind enough to make her stagger under her topsail, I should like to see the frigate who could touch her."

The Spitfire was a Yankee built schooner: low, long, and sneaking. She was the finest model ever launched; the head of her main mast raked so much, that it plombed the taff-rail; her topsail was low and square, and she possessed a succession of jibs, which were

assorted to the weather. She was painted black, with a narrow red streak, and on her stern was written, "The Jonathan Dobbs, of Baltimore." Her trade was not of the most legitimate order; and, occasionally, her bills of lading comprehended the cargoes of other vessels with which she had fortunately encountered.

In the piracy thus practiced, no blood was ever shed;—the captain of the Spitfire was a rare compound of clemency—honour—dishonour—fierceness—meekness; he had as many different ingredients as are found in the manufacture of punch—the sweet and the sour—the strong and the weak. His crew, formerly ruthless ruffians, had become tractable sailors, from the discipline enforced. Every man knew his station; and although each could have sacrificed his ship-mate to the law of any country, few quarrels and fewer recriminations took place. The plan adopted was usually this:—on the discovery of a strange sail, of which the Spitfire went in chase, and ascertained to be a merchantman, a long piece of

canvass, painted white, and with port holes in black, was fastened over the side, and covered the red streak; whilst another, with the "Fancy of Liverpool," written in large letters, was hung over the stern, and obscured the "Jonathan Dobbs." Of these last, as well as of the former, there were several sets, and the name, like that of the play actor, underwent a variety of changes; but with the crew, she had but one name, "The Spitfire;" and she was christened as such, long after her launch, in consequence of her sailing one night in the Mediterranean, when such was the highly phosphorescent state of the water through which she cleared her way with uncommon rapidity, that she seemed to emit fire from her bows.

The Spitfire had no established resting-place, she was the real cosmopolite. If her success was great, and her hold well stowed, she invariably steered to the port, or some port in the same country, to which the vessel she had robbed was destined, sold the cargo, and made sail to another far distant country. The

vessel plundered, was lightened entirely of her cargo, her papers, bills of lading, and so forth ; and having no object to attain in prosecuting her voyage, most generally returned to her owners, with a full and particular account of the pirate—which the very appearance of the vessel the next day would have contradicted. In all transactions of this kind, no face was ever visible ; every man wore a black mask, and although, when under the command of another, blood was not unfrequently spilt, yet under the present captain, not a drop had ever flowed.

When she appeared off the coast of Wales, she had no cargo on board ; she was trimmed to her best point of sailing ; she had avoided all strange sail, and, although occasionally chased by frigates and men-of-war of all descriptions, from her rakish and suspicious appearance, she soon crept away, and when night came on, altered her course, and escaped.

“ The yarn,” began Tom, “ occurred whilst another commanded us ; and he was a chap

who cared no more about human blood than an alligator; he was as covetous as he was miserly; and he lost his life by the men, who, had he been as this man, would have been protected and loved. We had been some time hovering off Antigua and Guadaloupe, and we had captured a few vessels; they were sent to our stow hole (that is the cargoes, for the craft were always destroyed) in one of the Tortuga Islands. Although all hands were pretty well pleased with the cruize, the captain was dissatisfied; he had reckoned upon more; but had he captured every ship which had sailed from France or England, his greedy, avaricious mind would never have been satisfied.

“Discontented, moreover, nay savage—he one day when he came on deck, as we were standing under easy sail to the northward on the star-board tack—ordered the mate to tack, make sail, and run down to the coast of La Guyra. In this town, he had several men in his employ—men who gave information of vessels in Puerto Cavallo, or of expected vessels in La

Guyra: when the information arrived, we generally put to sea. The roadstead of La Guyra is very unsafe, owing to the rollers, as they are called—a kind of ground swell—which sweep to the shore, previous to a coming breeze;—a vessel weighing with the rollers, coming in, would in all probability be wrecked; and when the breeze does come, it would be difficult to creep off the shore; besides, if an English man of war came to the same anchorage, it might have been disagreeable.

“ The vessel—she was then called, the San Francisco—was kept in the offing, whilst the captain went on shore. The coast is high; and on the summit of one of the hills, we had erected a small flag staff: whenever the signal was hoisted, we stood in, and sent a boat; but if a ball was shown—at night, a transparent one, by day, a white one,—it was a signal to keep in the offing. We arrived the following morning; and the captain, as usual, went on shore. He said, in a sulky manner, as he went over the side, ‘keep a good look out to leeward—but stand in shore, about five o’clock, and

keep your eyes on the signal post—shove off forward,’ he continued, ‘ I have forgotten my money !’ and jumping on deck, went below to a secret place in his cabin, and returned with a bag of dubloons. I know the chink of gold as well as a gambler ; for many’s the time I have handled that beautiful coin.

“ Now, there was not a man fore and aft the craft, who did not say, “ there’s something in the wind, or that bag of gold never would have gone over the side of the St Francisco—but to have been shipped either to Spain or England.” We all began pondering about this event—tacked the craft, and hove to with her head off shore ; at five o’clock we were close in, and the signal was flying to keep off : at dark the same signal was up, and therefore we kept out to sea for the night.

“ Two days elapsed, before we saw the signal up for the boat : it was sent, and the captain came on board with an empty bag, but in a very good humour. He brought with him a young creature dressed up in boy’s clothes. At first sight, we saw it was a girl of about seven-

teen, very pretty, and very bashful; indeed it was her blush betrayed her, when one of the crew, a good looking fellow, caught her in his arms, and lifted her on deck. She went down in the cabin, and the captain wrote down some signals; but as the vessel was rolling about, the young lady in pantaloons began to be qualmish and came on deck. Well, the good looking chap—that Spaniard, that the captain always talks to, took care of her, and lifting off her hat to cool her head, was convinced at once of the sex, from the long black hair. He was always kind to a woman; and somehow he got struck all of a heap with this creature. There’s a freemasonry in love; and I’m blessed if they did not exchange more signals, than the captain wrote down that blessed day!—never were a pair better assorted; the man was dark and handsome, with a pair of mustachios, on the ends of which, you might have hung a tin pot by the handle; he had the finest set of teeth I ever saw; and his figure was that of a man—not your thin wasted wasp-like fop—but a kind of a figure which denoted strength and activity;

whilst his eye—it is not dimmed now—was the sharpest and the clearest I ever beheld. Now, she, as far as I could overhaul her in her disguise, was the neatest little figure imaginable. I judged mostly from her foot and hand ; they were very small ; but her eyes ! there was a softness, and yet a quickness, about them I shall never forget ; and in spite of her rigging, it was easy to perceive that she was a woman grown.

“ As these two got chattering and whispering together, they kept their eyes fixed upon each other, and I’m blessed if I did not say, those two will catch fire shortly, if they keep up such a fire from their top lights. But although Carlos was making love, he was sounding the girl, who, as she continued talking, did not take away her hand from that of Carlos. His ears seemed to stand out like a watch dog ; the whole of his countenance was lit up ; his lips curled with a sort of savage ferocity, and the motion of his unemployed hand was that of a man, grasping at something which seemed to elude his clutch. There were forty of us on board, and we stood like

statues, watching Carlos and the girl; but although we all spoke the language well, yet we could not catch a sound excepting—‘ my father—I leave you to protect his—you swear it.’ — ‘ By Santa Maria I swear it !’ said Carlos. He heard the captain coming up the hatch way, and immediately made a remark about sea sickness;—the paper was put into her hand;—the boat was again manned—and the captain himself landed her.

“ The devil a question could we get Carlos to answer; and he had the impertinence to say, he never discovered it was a girl, although he supported her, with his hand round her waist, and held the other pretty firmly.

“ We now filled, and stood along the coast, until we came to a village; we stood in shore as close as we could, and were not a little surprised at finding the captain perched on the top sail yard with a glass, looking with an earnestness, he never had done before, especially on a village, and to our fancy, a very dirty one. In the evening, we stood back again to La Guyra, and picked up a boat, in which was the

same young gentleman who had been on board in the morning. The captain got into his boat, which, after pulling some distance for the schooner, laid upon her oars. Carlos had now full time to talk to the girl, and she seemed overjoyed at his attention ; but whatever passed between them, we never knew, excepting that it was quite clear they both had grown very fond of each other, and that whatever was in the wind, Carlos knew all about it ; when the captain returned, we stood out to sea. One or two vessels passed close to us, but we took no notice of them ; but on Thursday following, we made all sail towards the coast again, and made the land, just about the village before dark—we then shortened sail, and when darkness came on, for there was no moon, we stood close in, and picked up two boats. Carlos knew all about this, for as we stood in, he fixed himself on the starboard bow, and suddenly called out when he saw the boats—" Here they are, Sir."—In the first boat, was the same girl, and two men ; in the second, only two men ;

but all were armed. Our own boat was now hoisted out; and every man but three were ordered in—we were all well armed, and carried small sacks made of stout canvass—we crept silently to the shore, and landed in a smooth part of the beach.

“There was before us a church, which almost faced the landing place; to this, with the greatest silence, we proceeded. One of the Spaniards unlocked the door, and for the first time in my life, I stood armed in such a place. I was not more frightened than my neighbours; but as I paced up the aisle, and heard the footsteps of my companions trampling on the pavement, I felt a chill; I felt a fear come over me, I had never before experienced. The doors closed heavily upon us—the key turned in the lock, and thirty seven of us heard the noise, and startled at it—men who had dared the laws of every country—whose hands were all more or less tinged with blood—whose lives had been one day of crime—and crime which required courage. How was it, that we felt this fear, this boyish fear, as if the dead could come from the cold

damp vault beneath us, and rebuke us for our sacrilege.

“ ‘ You may speak now,’ said the girl, who was close to Carlos ; ‘ and if you like it, you can have a light—you will have to remain an hour or two ; but as we must be careful not to let the gleam be seen, we can come down into the vault.’

“ I never felt as I did then ; to think of going down amongst the dead !—the innocent, they say, can sleep in a church ; faith, I am satisfied I could not close my eyes.

“ The girl, who now cared little to disguise her sex, struck a light ;—she threw down some cigars, and from a basket which she carried, she took out a bottle or two of brandy—a pack of cards, and a small lantern. ‘ Make yourselves comfortable,’ she said, ‘ I must remain at the church door,’ Carlos went with her ; and we, borrowing courage from each other, assisted a little by the brandy, began to feel more easy. But why we had been brought here, was yet a secret. The captain was absent, and our gaoler, apparently, was a girl of seventeen ; still no one

murmured. The light but rendered our situation less enviable ; we saw the spider, the only tenant of the dull cold mansion, and well had it worked ; for over the damp walls it had spun its gossamer web. The vault being arched over head, it made the sound of a voice more hollow ; in the corner, in which the feeble light threw an indistinct ray, were two coffins ; and when one of our party first saw them, he turned as pale as a sheet, as he said : ‘ look there,’ his hand trembled like a leaf, and had we not been men inured to sights of horror—we should have run from the vault and escaped. And after all, what is there to shock one in the sight of a coffin ? nothing ; but we were in a church defiling the holy sanctuary of the dead—disturbing their repose, and for what ?—to commit some crime for which perhaps blood would be shed, to step from the threshold of religion, into the very vortex of sin.

“ The fear occasioned by the discovery of the coffin soon passed. One of our crew, the most hardened of us all, and who little thought how soon he would be placed in a damper dungeon,

rallied us on our fears; he lifted the upper coffin, and placed it on its end, whilst the other, which was smaller, and lighter, he pulled from its resting place, and having brought it to the centre of the vault, he opened the door of the lantern, and putting his hand in his pocket, brought out some dollars. 'Now,' said he, 'here we are for an hour—plenty of brandy—a pack of cards—a good table, and lots of lights. I'll keep the bank, and here it is,' as he said this, he dashed the dollars on the coffin, and the sound reverberated through the church.

"It was a relief to our mind to do anything; occupation was what we most needed; we had all examined our pistols and our swords—and but for this idea, we must have remained in idleness, conjuring up spectres—making spider's webs into ghosts, until fear might so have overcome us, that we should have been unable to have faced any desperate service. We now got round the coffin—some on their knees—others sitting, whilst the rest stood over, and betted their money; and in this manner the game began. It was Monte—a game you

know well, and every man who has been in South America has seen thousands of times. At first we played in silence—Spaniards seldom speak if they lose ; or if they win, they maintain the same countenance for twenty doubloons, as they do for a dollar ; they never rejoice at success, or repine at misfortune. But we had amongst us, some Frenchmen, fellows who never ceased chattering, and who made as much noise about losing a dollar, as if they had been tossed by a bull, and fallen into a pond, just deep enough to drown them if they laid quiet. They soon made the church ring with the riot, and this brought Carlos and the girl to the vault. Carlos was a desperate gambler, and his soul thirsted to be amongst us. Love kept him back for a moment—but that moment was soon to pass. He had now thoroughly gleaned the secret from the girl who would not quit his side.

“ It appears that every now and then, there was what is called a Fiesta given in this village—a place near which a river emptied itself into the sea—and where, free from alligators or

sharks, as the water was too shallow for those voracious creatures to venture therein, it was customary to bathe. This in certain times of the year, brought together many of the wealthy ; and here the gaming table literally groaned with gold. The captain had, from his spies, heard of this Fiesta being about to take place—and as there was no account given of vessels likely to arrive, he planned with his accomplices the attack upon these tables, and by way of reconnoitring the place, he went there the first night, and played deeply. He cared little if he won or lost, as he counted upon a sure return in a few days. He lost—but his countenance remained unchanged, he then walked about in several of the open places where booths had been erected ; and here, to the sound of various kinds of music, the women were dancing the graceful cachucha—or slowly turning in the waltz, as they varied its numerous figures—one of the spies, the father of the girl, who had tumbled in love, at first sight, with Carlos, had some property in the place, and this, of course, it was agreed should be untouched ; and it

afterwards occurred to us all, that the expression which we overheard, concerning the girl's father, was in reference to this money.

“ Every avenue leading to or from the village, was well ascertained ; but there was no place which afforded shelter and concealment to forty armed men, so convenient, or so secure as the church. The man who kept the keys, was either bought, or made drunk ; and the keys thus came into the hands of our party. The girl was, from her innocent appearance, the one selected to convey all intelligence ; and hence, as frequently happens, the mask of modesty and virtue, was employed to cover abandonment and vice. The captain having made himself master of the situation of the richest tables, and the best mode of attacking them, loaded us as I have described, every one well armed, and every one carrying a small canvass bag—and popped us in the church.

“ The game continued—sometimes as fortune varied, the bank being successful, and sometimes its gold and silver stock gradually diminishing. At last, it grew towards midnight ;

and Carlos, who had, in the church, availed himself of all he sought or desired, and satiated with the society of the girl, came into the vault, caring as little about the dead, over whom we played, as he did about the living, whom he left in tears, awaiting the arrival of the captain.

“ ‘Come,’ said I, as I saw Carlos enter, ‘every man in his turn; I’ll keep the bank now.’ It was agreed upon, and I emptied my pockets; declaring that I would stand twice or three times that sum—which I had on board. Carlos soon elbowed his way to the coffin; his greedy eyes were upon my money—and he staked his liberally. I won; and he, unlike any of his countrymen, betrayed considerable anger; he blasphemed fortune, and called upon the dead to witness that no one was half so unfortunate as himself. His companions looked on in silence; the play was entirely between him and myself. The vault re-echoed with his curses; and although the girl came and implored him to be more quiet and return to her, he only grew the

more impetuous. He drank largely of brandy, but it had no effect upon his brain.

“ It was now midnight—which one of the crew mentioned — adding, that a church at that hour was generally inhabited by the dead, who walked about the long aisles, or sat listlessly on the chairs. The girl heard voices, and warned the crew that the captain was approaching. ‘ Once more,’ said Carlos, ‘ my all—here—on board—my share of to-night’s plunder.’ I agreed, and dealt the cards. The first, was a nine—the second, the four of clubs—which last card, you know, has always been with us called the devil’s bedpost.

“ ‘ I’m for the four,’ said Carlos; ‘ and as the devil and I have always been friends, I’ll back it with all I have.’ I turned the pack over, and began to take the cards from the bottom. His eyes were close to the pack—I drew the cards cautiously down, and the nine won. In his fury, he jumped upon the coffin, cursing all around him. The lid gave way—and the pale face of the corpse appeared to us all! Can I ever forget that moment?

A rush was made, and the other coffin was upset, from which rolled the body of a man; his beard had grown since his death, and never do I remember to have seen so horrid a sight !

“ My money fell upon the corpse of the woman ; and, accustomed as I was to the dead, I did not dare touch it. We all, excepting Carlos, endeavoured to gain the door of the church ; but from the time he remained below, and the noise of money which we heard, we all thought Carlos recovered his losses, and from the corpse stole a golden heart. He would, could he have made money by it, have severed the heads, and walked away with them, one under each arm.”

“ And how did the attack prosper ?”

“ Well,—but, as I told you, the captain lost his life, and by the hand of Carlos. When he summoned us to the attack, the fresh air—the removal from the vault—the distance from the dead—all inspired us with courage. The boats were ordered round to another point nearer the village, which, as we passed, was

pointed out to us as the place to which we were to retreat, in the event of our meeting with any unexpected resistance. We were left concealed, for the moment, behind an empty booth, in which some of the early people had been dancing, and which was now deserted. The captain gave the signal at the moment the stakes were the heaviest; we made a rush—the players scampered away,—and the booty was soon in our bags. We cleared four tables, and all went on well; but, unfortunately, the father of the girl was seen by the captain to seize some of the-spoil and take it to his house. As this was considered against the agreement, he ordered four of his men to follow him, whilst the rest, most unceremoniously, were employed emptying the pockets of every person they could meet.

“ The riot was at its height; a general shrieking of women carrying their children away from the village, added to the fears of those who were attacked; and our booty was most considerably increased by the plunder of some of the houses.

“ In the meantime, Carlos had followed the four, who were to force the accomplice to relinquish his ill-gotten gains. At the threshold was the girl; she was now dressed in her proper clothes; her long hair floated over her shoulders, and her eyes sparkled like large stars in the darkest night. The captain seized hold of her rudely and put her aside; Carlos supported her. ‘ Now, lads,’ said the captain, ‘ clear the house out.’

“ ‘ Avast, there!’ said Carlos, ‘ remember the agreement; this house is not to be touched; you pledged yourself to Francisca, and so have I.’

“ ‘ By the saint at whose shrine we knelt in the church, when without the priest you made me your wife,’ said the girl, ‘ protect us!’

“ ‘ To the last,’ said Carlos, ‘ fear not, my little one, the man who passes here must walk over my body.’

“ ‘ Ruffian!—villain!—traitor!—mutineer!’ cried the captain, ‘ this to your heart!’ The blow was parried from Carlos, and struck the

girl, who Carlos believed was killed. It was returned, and the captain was a corpse.

“ ‘ Now lads,’ said Carlos, with the greatest coolness, ‘ now my wife is dead, I’ll take her dower from her father ;’ and walking into the house, he brought out every doubloon, and left the accomplice to mourn for the loss of his daughter and his money.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“ I TELL you,” said Rawlinson, as he addressed his proud son-in-law, “ it must be done ; Laura Mackenzie must be invited here. Through her we may secure Herbert ; and by having him near us, we may soothe the old man. She maintains him ; and through her alone can we reach Herbert.”

“ What an adventure, Rawlinson. I am lost in the numerous circumstances attending it. My brother, a deserter—nay, driven to commit a robbery—and I, the guilty cause. Look at me !—do I appear a man at peace with himself ? Does all this wealth bring me nights of sleep and hours of happiness ? The further I advance, the more I have to appre-

hend ; and the guilty man has not one moment free from uneasiness.”

“ Read your bible, Sir Ronald ; the greatest sinners invariably become the greatest saints. What is to be gained by any other course but contempt—abject poverty—the peacock stripped of his feathers, to be loathed, hated, despised. Come, come, Sir Ronald, I shall begin to distrust you—and then, if rogues fall out——”

“ *Honest* men get their due. I must advance—I cannot retreat ; but I would fain relieve myself from some of my misgivings, by settling some permanent sum upon my brother.”

“ Settle him elsewhere ; settle him abroad, at the King’s expense. Whilst he lives—whilst he can remain in this country, we hold our wealth with a very slender grasp. Besides, what he might spend, I can distribute amongst my creditors.”

“ What ! never satisfied ; the wealth of Cræsus would be useless to supply your extravagance.”

“Faith, that is not bad. I do not spend half of *our* fortune,—whilst you have to pension Blackburn and others, who know how to be discreet, even before a magistrate.”

“He could not injure me; I swore him to the fact that he could not identify the person who walked with Herbert.”

“Why endeavour to console yourself?—Herbert lives. If he speaks out, the corroborative testimony of Blackburn would be confirmation strong as holy writ.”

“In which you do not believe. I have a son—that binds me more to my crime—I would leave him heir to this princely estate; for when I and your daughter are gone, and some well paid flatterer of the dead tells of my virtue—my liberality—my justice—I would have my son inherit all the respect such a character inspires—without the shame attendant on the forgerer—the robber.”

“Pshaw! the best epitaph I ever heard was this :

“ Three lovelier babes you ne’er did see
Than God Almighty give to me ;
They was took ill of ague fits,
And here they lies—as dead as nits.”

Am I to tell my daughter to write to Laura Mackenzie ?”

“ If you say it must be so. But I dread the eye, even of a young girl ; I fear my own shadow ; and not a soul passes those great gates, but I feel as if the officers of justice were at hand.”

“ God bless me,” said Rawlinson, “ what a penitent man. Well, before I die, I’ll make a clean bosom—I’ll confess myself to myself,—and I shall be my own father confessor, and absolve myself of all sin, crime and improper thoughts.”

“ Do go, Rawlinson ; go and let your daughter invite Laura Mackenzie, and tell her to send some money ; leave me to myself—the only person, besides yourself, I would most gladly fly from.”

“ Books, books, Sir Ronald ; we must be friends, you know. By the bye, I’ll talk of

my own affairs another time. Good evening; we shall see you, I suppose, at dinner."

"If the earth could open," said Sir Ronald to himself, as his associate withdrew, "and swallow up the whole world—omitting in its insatiate gulf that one man—there would be left enough of wickedness of thought—enough comprehensiveness of crime to demoralize the new generation, even were they as numerous as the ants which now inhabit the earth. He asks me to dinner in my own house—he thinks it hard he does not spend the half of my fortune—and, in every step I take, I can trace the watchful vigilance of this man. My wife, too, she clings to him more than to me. Oh that I could rid myself of this cursed birr—shake off this second self, from which I can no more escape than from my shadow."

"Write it directly, my child," said Rawlinson to his daughter; "we shall be more secure, by securing her."

They were alone, in a small room which commanded a distant view of the sea; there was a long telescope, mounted on a stand,

which stood upon the table near this window, and from words which escaped Lady de Lancy, her principal occupation was looking at any passing vessel, and killing time by avoiding, as far as possible, all thought of her situation. She had gleaned from her father, who, indeed, saw the necessity of intrusting her with some part of the secret, that her title was not the most secure; and that, under any circumstances, Albert must be kept away. It was now doubly requisite to intrust her more fully; through her, Rawlinson counted upon gaining all the requisite information, and the daughter implicitly followed his directions.

“She is a nice girl, my dear,” he began, “and a good companion for you. She will dissipate some of the gloom which hangs about you. Alone, you get fanciful, and, perhaps, fearful; but with another of your own sex, the rides, the walks, the house, will be less lonely—less melancholy.”

“Heaven knows, my dear father, I would ten thousand times rather have wedded your clerk, and shared your house, than have be-

come a great lady, inclosed in a splendid prison. There is not a soul who visits here, excepting occasionally Mr. Molesworth; and when he christened young Ronald, he was as inquisitive as if he doubted my being its mother. He refused to have the ceremony performed but in the church—and kept his eye upon Sir Ronald as he passed his father's vault."

"Your fancy," replied her father. "People always become suspicious when they are burdened with a secret. Tell me, is your husband kind to you? Does that haughty manner unbend itself, occasionally? or is he ever the same thoughtful, reserved, melancholy creature, which, to me, he appears?"

"The same ever! we are married, it is true; but there is no confidence between us—I am here the lady of Raven Castle; yet I am as little heeded by the servants as a governess might be; those poor creatures, who are just inferior to their employers, and a shade above the servants, looked down upon by one party and not revered by the other. If I order

any thing, that order is not obeyed. My wish is communicated to Sir Ronald ; and under his direction, perhaps, it is gratified. But all my rides, my walks, my airings, are circumscribed. I must not approach the village ; and scarce dare venture to the cliffs. On my return I am not questioned as to my ride ; but every thing is gleaned from my servants. My own maid watches me ; and when I move from room to room I hear a door open behind me—or see one close before me. Father, I have become a wretch to save you.”

“ The duty of all good daughters. We are rich, instead of poor ; powerful, instead of subservient ; respected, instead of despised. We are in this life to shape our course according to the popular will and feeling : to be poor is to be criminal. Fear not, Margaret ; I will speak to Sir Ronald.”

“ Not for the world ! in marriage no third party, not even a father ought to interfere. It would render him worse ; whereas I hope, by an apparent cheerfulness, a mimicry of gladness when the heart is not glad, to win

him more to me. You have made me aware how treacherous is the foundation on which we stand : it shall be my care, as it is my interest, to strengthen it."

" Good girl, you have a laudable ambition, We are all in this life struggling to live : he plays his cards the best, who best succeeds ; and as at cards—some play a straight forward game, and perhaps win a little ; others by some trifling sleight of hand—not quite so honest perhaps, but much more adroit, become the winners of the larger stakes, and prosper. Life is only a pack of cards well managed ; they are in the wrappers of honesty ; but once uncovered, are the shufflers—and the cuts of existence. About this girl, this Laura Mackenzie, is she the simple, thoughtless, open girl she assumes to be ? or is she only disguising the cleverness of woman under that same wrapper of honesty."

" A poor country girl, I should say—without a spark of cunning, excepting that which your wicked sex affirm is born in us. A modest, pretty, young, unassuming creature, whose ab-

sence will be a release to her poor mother, and who here can be a companion and a friend."

"Remember, my object is to lure Herbert back; but of that we shall have sufficient time to speak. Mention, however, in your letter, your great joy at hearing from me that the good trusty old servant yet lives. Does your husband dine with us to-day?"

"I suppose so; but latterly he has become so absent in his manner, that to avoid suspicion he has dismissed the servants from the room, and not unfrequently forgets that he ought to be seated, but walks about, and never utters a word."

"The fellow is either mad or is a philosopher. Dispatch that letter to night. For the present, good bye! we meet again at dinner."

It was winter, and by five o'clock it was dark. When this hour came, Sir Ronald, wrapped in his cloak generally betook himself towards the cliff; and here, not unfrequently, he would stand, regardless of the cold wind, watching the waves, which for a moment chafed and sparkled on the shore, and then were

lost for ever. Here, gazing on the large mirror in which the skies were reflected, he was wont to hold converse with himself; to ponder over his past life; and endeavour to draw consolation from the resources of his own mind. What is a man, but a wave, that dances and bubbles for a moment, and then is washed from existence? Can any man remark the crowds of people which impede the progress in the streets, and not feel his own insignificance, when reflecting, that in a few brief years, every one now hustling through life, will be no more;—that the rising generation shall come and go as wave succeeds the wave—and that even the recollection of men's names shall die away, or only be recorded on a stone which man too often passes without a thought of eternity.

“To live,” said Sir Ronald, as he paused upon the brink of the steep cliff which overhung the shingly shore, “to live with the apprehension of death is dreadful; if from my mind I could blot out all recollection of the past, I could look forward to futurity as a blessing. Yet why think of that future which

may never be. The countless millions of animals and insects which live upon the earth, may, for aught we know, have the same hopes—the same fears: they congregate together; they live together; build their houses; choose their governors, have certain laws and regulations which bind them to their different societies; and, from their actions, they think. As I walked this day, I marked an ant which had discovered some food: it was too large for this insect to remove; I saw it depart towards the nest, and on its way it met another; the prey was then far distant; they stopped, and evidently talked; the last ant then left the tract it was pursuing and went direct to the prey; there it remained until many—many came; they then, with as much art as man could divine, carried the bulky morsel to their nest, there to preserve it until winter! Are these creatures not rational, and if rational why not immortal? But is man the only creature that treads this earth who is to enjoy futurity? I think not, and if it is extended to all—there scarcely can be an eternity of punishment. Whenever I

read the sacred volumes, I tremble lest it should be so; when I consult my own reason and my own pride, I disbelieve it. The wicked, they say, are the only people who are entirely credulous; and they wish to disbelieve what they fear may be true. I am steeped in sin and cannot retract; I must go forward or die of shame. Oh, that I could feel but one moment of that happiness I have known ere I was acquainted with that devil who lured me into evil."

Thus pondered Sir Ronald, as he looked towards the sea. The cold night wind now warned him to return, and do the honours of his table; and with the haughty step peculiar to him, he began to retrace his path.

"Good evening to you, Sir Ronald," said a man who had long watched the Baronet. "You need not look over the cliff—for he can't come up again."

It was Blackburn, and the allusion was to Herbert. Sir Ronald took no notice but walked on.

"I want money for my secresy, Sir Ro-

nald," said the man, as he walked by his side.

"How fellow! you dare not rob me!"

"No, nor push you over the cliff either,—but I dare speak out—and will. Do you think I am not going to gain by my knowledge? Be prudent: the world says you are wise: put a golden muzzle on the dog who might bite you. I want but little; and will have it."

"What have I to fear from you? to-morrow you shall leave your cottage; you shall no longer be a tenant or a labourer of mine; and I will save you these nightly walks, perhaps, to light other fires for the safe guidance of smugglers."

"Well, Sir Ronald, be it so! and to-morrow I will boldly tell how Herbert disappeared."

"He lives, fool! and is in Cornwall."

"Then, perhaps, he will say if I speak truth or not."

This answer, which so nearly corresponded with the reasoning of Rawlinson, led Sir Ronald to think that Blackburn had been tampered with.

“ Fool!” said Sir Ronald, “ do I not hold your own deposition, signed with your own hand, in which you swore you could not identify the man ?”

“ That’s true enough, and what of that? I have already been believed a thief, a murderer—and now I shall get a better name and only be called a liar.”

“ I will give you some money, Blackburn, if you will answer me one question.”

“ Say its gold, and I’ll answer any one you can ask.”

“ There, are you satisfied ?” Blackburn nodded assent. “ Now, tell me, when did you speak to Mr. Rawlinson last ?”

“ About two hours ago.”

“ And on what subject ?”

“ You only paid for the one question. I have enough money now—more would lead to suspicion ; when this is expended, I will come to you and sell my information. Good night, Sir Ronald, I do not think I shall leave either your house, or your service to-morrow. Bless you, I am much too useful to some one else!”

The sturdy vagabond walked off, leaving Sir Ronald to wonder at the fellowship of crime, and how little confidence was to be placed in scoundrels. Then even Rawlinson desired more money, and in spite of long continued firmness of resolution, Sir Ronald at last gave way; he was then left to his pride and his books, with a sneering recommendation of Rawlinson to be very prudent and discreet, and to pay those who serve him well.

Two years had elapsed since the above scene took place; and, with the exception of an allowance paid to Blackburn, who never would answer any question at all, the parties continued much in the same situation. Rawlinson lived like a prince; his equipage was equal to Sir Ronald's; his business was totally neglected; and he travelled about as it suited his convenience;—but Herbert had not arrived nor had Laura accepted the invitation.

At the expiration of the above time, Lady de Lancy received the following letter.

“ Rose Cottage, near Truro.

“ My dear Lady de Lancy,

“ I have no words to thank you for your frequent pressing invitations, for I am borne down by grief and poverty. The great consolation in affliction is the pouring out of one's heart to another. It is now four months since my poor mother was taken suddenly ill : she never left her bed until last week, when she was removed to her last resting place. She is dead and buried ; and I am alone and almost friendless ! If she has left me no inheritance in wealth, she has left me that which surpasses wealth—she has taught me how to live and how to die. When, at the close of her long life, her respiration difficult, her utterance feeble, she became aware that the lamp was nearly out—her hours nearly completed. ‘ My child,’ she said, ‘ may He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, watch over you, guide and protect you ! my money will be your money, unless some unforeseen disaster robs you of it ; my reputation will be yours, to guard, to protect. You know best how I have lived, and

how calmly I die. Let not the poorer than yourself regret my loss; believe me, the hand that receives feels not half the gratification of that which bestows charity. To the great and rich, charity is a name; it means the giving of that which is of little value to the donor—and given as an obligation. True charity is that you will practise: you will rob yourself of a comfort to alleviate greater distress than you suffer; for a moment it may deprive you of a comfort; but at this hour it will return you your wealth ten thousand fold, for you will feel that your wealth is in heaven. I have more strength left than I had thought;—listen—you will soon be deprived of her, who watched your infancy—who was your companion, your friend, your mother. I have instructed you in religion—I have taught you, as I believe this moment may convince you, its value. I yield up my soul, not in confidence, but with a well-grounded hope of a glorious hereafter. I would have you follow, what I feel at this awful moment to be true;—of your wordly conduct be this your consolation, happi-

ness does not consist in riches ; it is engendered in the well-regulated mind, and is capable of being imparted to others. The lower order of people, who have ample employment, and enough to satisfy hunger, are far happier than the rich and great ; sigh not then for more than you have ; but be contented with that which has contented me. When I am removed, you had better change your residence for some time ; but never forget this humble home, or this hour, the last of my life, and the most useful of yours. Remember, child, you have no parent left to stand as a barrier between you and eternity ; all are swept away—and you must follow. To that last moment direct your mind when young, and God will not desert you when you are old. Now read my prayers—and I will follow the words with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength—place your hands to cover mine, and hold them up to my God as the last sign of my humble mind.’

“ I knelt by the bedside ; I took her hands ; I read—at first she followed audibly—her ut-

terance grew fainter and fainter; but the lips moved. I read to the end of our nightly prayer—and, as I slackened my grasp of her chilly hands, as I finished with—‘be with us now and for ever’—before I could say that last ‘amen,’ my mother was a corpse.—I cannot tell why I did not burst into tears, why I did not throw myself upon the body and kiss it; for I felt a calmness, a resignation, a power within me I had never felt—there was but one person in the room, and he was by our side, and knelt with us at that awful moment—it was Herbert—to him the shock of seeing one some years younger than himself die was great,—but he became my guardian and protector—he called in those who manage the last ceremony, he set up himself with the corpse, and I heard him pray, that his last hour might be like this when his mind was unburthened of the heavy secret it contained.

“I followed my mother to the grave, and before I had learnt even to believe she was not present, her brother sent a solicitor to claim the property. He said her will was a useless

document as it was illegal, and he wished me to leave it with him. At this moment Herbert interfered, and taking it from my hands, said : “ I will keep it for Miss Laura ; if it is useless, you cannot require it.” I was warned to quit the house within a month ; I have no adviser, no friend but yourself ; if now you would receive me, Sir Ronald might, by his advice, and your father’s counsel, save me from irretrievable ruin, and you add an additional favor to many acts of kindness experienced by,

“ Your’s very truly,

“ LAURA MACKENZIE.”

Rawlinson was present when the letter arrived ; he clasped his hands with joy ; the poor destitute girl would apply to him ! and what was a young innocent creature in worldly wit and cunning, to oppose one who had all his life been a villain. Herbert, and the allusion to the secret, was a point of deeper interest, and after a conference with Sir Ronald, he returned to his daughter and dictated the following letter ; but he said : “ All the part, my dear

Margaret, about death, and sorrow, and such like, you had better compose—women manage these things better than men; they are always so full of words, tears, sorrows, regrets, and such like; so just while I finish a bottle of the Baronet's claret do you begin the letter, and I will dictate the material part."

"Raven Castle.

"My dearest Laura,

"I cannot tell you how sincerely, how deeply, I am interested in your present melancholy situation. I joined in your tears, and I felt as deeply, and as sensibly, as one person could feel for another. These trials, my dear Laura, must be borne with fortitude, for it is useless to repine at what cannot be averted; but the loss of a parent, so good, so excellent as yours, is a blow hard to survive. I have read her last advice four times; I have learnt it by heart, and I already feel myself better for the instruction; her last words will ever be a consolation to you, whose mind resembles that of your most excellent and exemplary mother.

“That’s quite enough of that stuff,” said Rawlinson, “make a full stop and begin a new paragraph.”

“It will give me the greatest pleasure, and satisfaction, to see you here, for as long a time, as it suits you to stay: I cannot but think you would sooner be restored to your usual serenity of mind, by an immediate absence from the place in which you have lately experienced so severe, so bitter a loss, and I hope and trust that I shall be able to alleviate your sufferings as I shall use my utmost efforts to that effect.”

“There,” said Rawlinson that’s quite enough of that; make short paragraphs, and write a clear hand;—now go on.

“My father has desired me to say, that he will give his undivided attention to your affairs;—he fears that some deceit has been practised, but he pledges himself to unravel the mystery. He begs that the will may be kept in Herbert’s possession who will be required to make oath, that it has not been out of his custody since your sainted mother’s death—

and that as he will, of course, accompany you here, the affidavit can be made before Sir Ronald, as the document would be then given up. We are quite alone, and I shall make it a point not to see any company until you feel that a slight variation may contribute to your happiness."

"Now," continued Rawlinson, "give her a touch of your husband's partiality for her ; to be sure he would as soon see the devil, as any thing black ; and then finish your letter, as a composer does a tune, with the first part a little varied."

"My husband is most anxious to see you ; although generally reserved upon all points, he could not be silent upon your affairs ; he says he will assist my father in seeing justice done you ; for he added, 'she was always a favorite of mine, and I loved to hear her sweet and beautiful voice.' I trust you will excuse my comparatively short letter, which I have written with much pain, as my feelings overcame me. But, my dearest Laura, pray believe me when I say, that I grieve for the loss you have

experienced as a sister. I feel for you as a friend, and I most anxiously await your arrival, that you may teach me, with your mother's instruction, to live a charitable and good life, that at the last I may meet my death with all the fortitude, all the hope of your excellent mother. Adieu, for the present, for the moment; do make haste and come to your very affectionate friend,

“ MARGARET DE LANCY.”

“ Shall I add a postscript about Herbert?”

“ No, child; the postscript of a woman's letter always embodies the most essential part. It will look as if Herbert was our greatest aim. Send the girl some money, and mention it now; it will look like delicacy, and yet be the most essential point. It's quite wonderful how you women string words together, and, generally speaking, how frivolous is the substance. But,” he continued as he emptied the bottle, “ a man, without he is a parson, never makes a good hand of a consolatory epistle.”

“ Do you ride before dinner, Margaret?”

said de Lancy as he entered; "pray do not disturb yourself, Rawlinson. Perhaps you would like another bottle of claret at your lunch?"

"Not to-day, my good son, or I should have called for it. Ride, Margaret; I have some papers to arrange, and some of those daily visitations which sicken the heart of man—'bills to pay.' How I wish that gold could be drawn from the well, as easy as water."

"It does not give you much trouble," replied Sir Ronald, in his bitter manner, "either to find, or to draw it."

"And when I do, good son, I am sure you will be too happy to draw it for me."

The letter reached its destination by the post; and Laura thanked good fortune, that, in her distress, she had found some good friends willing to receive and assist her. Herbert was in the house, and heard the letter read; a smile passed over his face as he listened to the part relative to the will, but he made no remark.

“Come, good Herbert,” said Laura; “let us leave this place of mourning—the sooner we go the better. At Raven Castle we shall find a home, and near it, if I prosper, I can find a future residence.”

“No doubt of it, Miss, no doubt of it, Miss;—but I think you know more of friends than you do of dangers and difficulties. Excuse me, Miss, I am an old man—I once thought, a tried and a trustworthy one; but I found myself so much in the way at Raven Castle, that even the cliffs were too close to the house. I will never return there until Master Albert is the lord of the Manor.”

“Alas, Herbert,” replied Laura, “that will never be; there is now an heir to the estate, in young Ronald.”

“And one before him,” suddenly interrupted Herbert, “in Master Albert. Even if I die, what I have told you, is on paper, and I have no doubt that Mr. Molesworth would soon interfere. No, no, Miss; I will keep the will until I can get a solicitor, who I know will not let an hour elapse be-

fore he comes,—he knows all the business already,—and I am to keep possession until the new claimant can make good his claim. What! is it right for the shepherd to forsake his flock, and leave the wolf to seek his prey in security? Your maid will be sufficient protection for you ;—no Englishman would insult one so young, and one in such affliction! Here, without Mr. Law alters his mind, I stay; and if they get me out without a company of foot soldiers, or two-and-twenty constables, my name is not Old Herbert.”

At this important moment, Mr Law appeared. He was a short man with a bald head, neatly dressed, and with an eye as bright and as sparkling as a star. “This is the gentleman, Miss; you had better be guided by him, than by Mr. Rawlinson.”

The case was soon made known, which Herbert had the day previous endeavoured to explain.

“Show me the will,” said Mr. Law.

Laura read that part of the letter which alluded to its safe custody.

“ Pooh !” went the little man, “ what’s the use of a will, if it’s locked up in a drawer ? It must be proved.” Herbert at once offered it.

“ Ah !” began Mr. Law, as he stuck his spectacles on, which made his eyes look brighter than before. “ A bad case, I have no doubt ; written with her own hand, and, consequently, some informalities—something confused—something irregular ;—its very odd that ladies cannot consult men, whose business it is to protect them, to draw up a document which would make them easy when alive, and prevent disputes when they are dead. ‘ This is the last will and testament,’ copied from a book, I suppose,” said Mr. Law, in a low running bass voice, “ ‘ of Mary Mackenzie,’ was your mother’s name, Mary ?”

“ Yes,” replied Laura, as the big tear started from her eye, and coursed rapidly down her face.

“ Don’t cry, my dear Miss Mackenzie,” said Law ; “ I am aware of your heavy loss. I ask merely that I may see we are right as we pro-

ceed ; and believe me when I say, that to the orphan in affliction, Mr. Law never yet said a word, intentionally, to wound, or sent in a bill to plunder." He took her hand. " In me," he continued, " you will find a friend—not a pilferer ; a protector—not one to live upon your ruin. Excuse my manner, it may be rough, but it is not intentional, if I am rude either in remarks or in my manner ;" he gave Laura's hand a gentle squeeze, whilst old Herbert's voice was heard just above a whisper, " God bless him ; he's no more like an attorney, than I'm like a bishop."

" It's my nature—not my inclination."

" Let us see," he continued. " Ah, Mary Mackenzie—had she any other name?"

" None," said Laura, in a subdued voice.

" Good, so far. Humph, rather a bad hand for a copying clerk ; written when she must have been ill. ' I, Mary Mackenzie, being in sound health and vigor of mind,' ah, that ought to have come first, but better late than never ; ' do thus dispose of all my property, real or personal, and of all I possess, in goods,

chattels, or of any kind of property whatsoever, which I may be possessed of at my death ;' terrible confusion, but not altogether unintelligible—strong minded woman, though. Pray don't cry, Miss Laura ; it hinders me from seeing through my spectacles. ' And I, Mary Mackenzie, do by this, my last will and testament, revoke, annul, and render void and of no effect, any previous will or testament and all letters, writings, sayings,' determined to have enough of it here, at any rate, ' which I might have formerly made, written, or spoken ; and this alone is to be my last will and testament ; I give and bequeath unto my dear daughter, Laura Mackenzie, all my property, real or personal, goods or chattels,' it ought to have been and, instead of, or ; it seems like a choice ; ' and to her, and to her alone, do I so bequeath it, and I further make her my sole executrix.' A curious concern surely ; but, perhaps, good enough. It is dated—three witnesses—ah !—well !—pity a lawyer did not make it. Women should never make their own wills—they so seldom know their own minds."

Having delivered himself of this pretty specimen of his knowledge of the fair sex, he looked over the will again, folded it up, placed it in his pocket, wiped his spectacles and cased them,—then stirring the fire and placing himself before it, began humming a tune, in a manner so perfectly absent, as rather to alarm Laura. Herbert stood in the corner, watching Mr. Law, but Mr. Law was quite insensible to the scrutiny. At last, he finished his tune, and then passing his hand before his forehead, began :—“ I will be much obliged to you, Miss Mackenzie, if you will answer my questions, just ‘ yes,’ or ‘ no ;’ the fewer words, the easier they are remembered ; and long sentences, especially if they are confused, embarrass me.” Laura looked at him, as much as to say, “ Ask.”

“ Do you know if your mother ever made a will, with the exception of this one ?”

“ Some time ago, my mother——”

Here she was interrupted by Mr. Law humming a tune ; she took the hint, and said, “ Yes.”

“ Ah,” said Law, “ that’s something like—short and sensible. When ?”

“ About two years ago.”

“ About ; does that mean more, or less ?”

Laura recollected herself, and then said :

“ It is two years and one month, exactly ; that is within a day or two—more or less.”

Mr. Law smiled.

“ Who was present ?”

“ My uncle.”

“ Have you ever seen him since ?”

“ No.”

“ You are are certain it was more than one year past.”

“ Certain.”

“ Good bye ; go to Raven Castle ;—no, stop—you are left sole executrix. You must come with me to London. Your servant will be with you,—be ready to-morrow. Herbert, come here ; now mind what I say ; you are to remain in this house, and mind you never leave it, so as to allow any one else to gain possession of it.”

The next day Mr. Law came to the cot-

tage in his chariot. Laura and her maid took their seats, arrived in London, and drove to a brother of Mr. Law. The next day, it was found requisite to enter a caveat against the will before mentioned, which the uncle had put in; and, as now, the law's delays must be awaited, and Laura could be of no use in town, she started for and safely arrived at Raven Castle. She was received warmly by Margaret, who sighed for a companion to break through the long solitude to which she had been condemned. But Rawlinson, when he saw the prey had eluded his grasp, that Herbert was not in the slender retinue, became sulky and morose; even he was baffled by the foresight of an old man whom he had despised and feared. Sir Ronald was as cold and haughty as usual; he endeavoured, on seeing the deep mourning and the pale beautiful face beneath the sombre bonnet, to become somewhat more amiable, but it was a vain attempt—he could not overcome his nature,—and having made his speech of welcome, which would have frozen any unaccustomed person,

he withdrew to his own room, took down a musty volume, and set seriously to work to satisfy himself that, after death, there was a total annihilation, and that in this world—however deep the guilt—the punishment was the secret sting of conscience, and the constant fear of detection. Against this persuasion his sense revolted, but there were writers who had maintained the point; and if he could persuade himself to believe it—why he cared little about his former errors. It is a creed which excessive guilt alone can credit; and from the moment a man does believe it, he may be restrained from crime by the fear of the gallows, but never from the apprehension that the eye of an all-seeing Providence watches his ways and records his errors.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
SCHULZE AND CO. 13, POLAND STREET.



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